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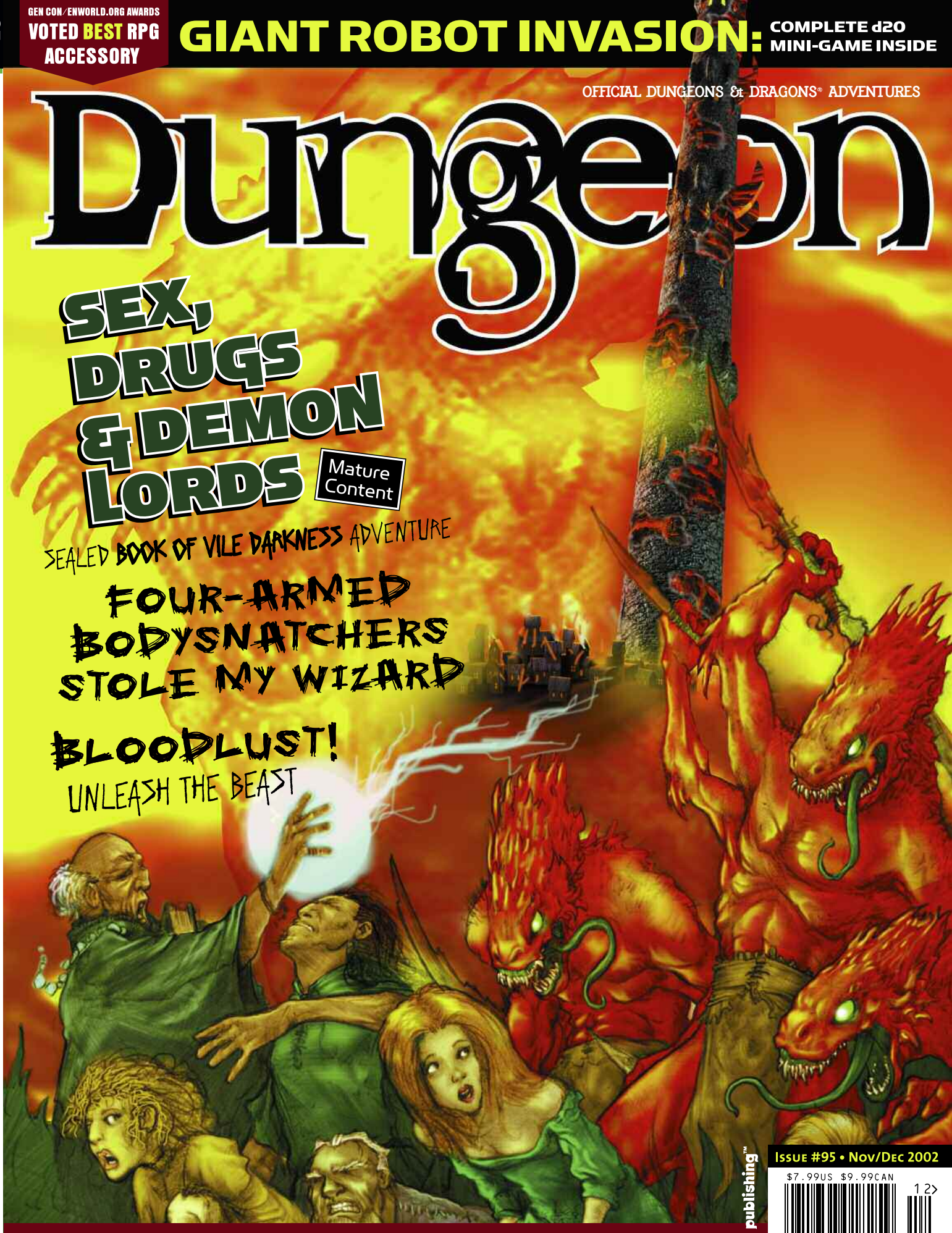

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DUNGEON • PORPHYRY HOUSE HORROR • THE JACKAL'S REDEMPTION • MECHA CRUSADE

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2002

Dungeon®

November/December 2002
Vol. XVI, No. 5 Issue #95

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"Porphyry House Horror" is an adventure featuring mature content in support of the new *Book of Vile Darkness*. It is presented in a special sealed section.

Death
Grinn'd horrible a ghastly smile, to hear
His famine should be fill'd.

—John Milton
Paradise Lost. Book ii. Line 845.

COVER

When xill attack, no one is safe. The citizens of Halea's Reach learn that lesson the hard way in "The Jackal's Redemption." Richard Whitters has captured the terror of these townsfolk as the xill herd them to certain doom on a distant plane.

ANTI-EDITORIAL

"Hey Kyle, I need you to write the editorial this month."

"Am I being punished for misnumbering the spine last month?"

"No. No. Its the *Book of Vile Darkness* issue. You know—demon worship, drugs, torture . . . I thought you . . . "

"What are you trying to say, Chris?"

I swear, you smash one toy to bits, slap another art director, and call an editor-in-chief "ass face" in front of the whole company, and suddenly you've got a reputation. In my defense—the toy was loud, it was a loving Burt Reynolds/Dom Delouise kind of slap, and sometimes you've got to sacrifice one innocent soul to get laughs out of an entire room. I'm no more irritable than any other art director. Its nature's way of saying, "Shhh. He's on deadline. Let him work." Turns out I'm not a jerk; I'm an *anti-hero*.

Art directors are perfectly suited to the role of the anti-hero. Our livelihood hinges on convincing others that our opinions are somehow more valid than theirs, which makes us none to popular. We're usually the ones behind the office's crazier schemes, and the ones who greet bureaucracy with the most indignance. When confronted with the titanic evil of the deadline, the art director relies principally on artifice. Whether taking liberties with typography to make things fit, or fabricating fantastic excuses for why the issue is late, the production oriented art director is willing to do what it takes to get the job done. Though its a challenge, I thrive in this environment and have embraced the role of the outsider since I was a kid. Back in the early '80s, some parents on my street forbade their kids from playing with me because I was into Dungeons & Dragons. Although it was pretty sad at the time, I get a big kick out of that now. (I have already dispatched my *evil* legions of winged, giant, naked mole-rats to deliver copies of the *Book of Vile Darkness*, signed in the vaso-cerebral fluid of underpaid public school teachers, to these parents.)

Gaming imitates life, and I always favor the trickster in my campaigns. Tremendous monumental evil, the likes of which exists in its purest form only in fantasy, rolls over any opposition foolish enough to confront it head-on. A threat like this is best dismantled from the inside by someone who understands it and isn't afraid to learn from it. The abject evil and depravity many DMs throw at their groups mandates heroes who can make the tough decisions. What does the paladin do when confronted with the master villain who says, "Gimme your *+3 sword* or I eat this baby's head"? He waits for the rogue hiding in the bushes to pop an arrow between the bastard's shoulders.

There is, however, a fine line between being an anti-hero and being just plain belligerent. Take a look at the campaign I DM. What a lousy bunch of amoral mercenaries my friends turned out to be. Now that my buddy playing the paladin has moved away, there's a conspicuous lack of a moral compass in the party. Nothing's stopped these "bad boys" from subsequently joining the thieves' guild and turning into a gang of efficient, high-level thugs. They're far more likely to bribe the master villain for a cut of the loot than send his head tumbling down the stairs. Ironically, this is where the *Book of Vile Darkness* comes in handy. Nothing galvanizes a morally lazy party than a menace so nasty that its very existence sticks in their craw. We'll see what side of the law these anti-heroes want to be on once they're confronted with necrophilic, fascist, unlicensed, puppy mill operators. You want a dark and disturbing world, you got it. I've seen the true face of evil at 3:30 A.M., finalizing files the day of hand-off. The *Book of Vile Darkness* will now let me share my pain.

Satanically,

kyle H.

Art Director, Dark Lord

Dungeon

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LETTERS

Tell us what you think of this issue's adventures. Write to: Letters, *Dungeon Magazine*, 3245 146th Place SE, Suite 110, Bellevue, WA 98007 or send an email to dungeon@paizopublishing.com.

YES, IT'S #94. NOT #92

What's the story? I just got the latest issue of Dungeon/Polyhedron. It is numbered #92 on the spine, but I'm sure it is issue #94. And what's up with the cover for Polyhedron being hidden way back on page 42 in the middle of the *Omega World* section?

I have had a subscription to Dungeon for at least three years, plus a three-year membership to the RPGA which I understand was added to the end of my Dungeon subscription. How do I find out how far out my current subscription to Dungeon goes? I love the magazine (I have every issue to date) and would like to know if there is a lifetime subscription available, or if I can add to my current subscription for, say, an additional twenty years or so at the current subscription price?

What is the possibility of having tactical maps as inserts in future issues, or available as downloads on the website?

Ted Albert
Via Email

<Sigh> Yes, we accidentally printed the wrong issue number on the spine. Thanks to everyone—we mean everyone—who wrote in to tell us about the mistake. We appreciate it. Really. The reason we selected Ted's letter to print out of all the others is that it gives us an opportunity to let folks know that the subscription contact information hasn't changed with the magazine's recent move to Paizo Publishing. All questions, including how many years are left on your sub and how far you can extend it, can still be directed to ***dungeon@pcspublink.com*** *As for a lifetime subscription, nothing is available yet, nor is anything likely to in the near future. As for tactical maps, we're not quite sure what you mean. Can anyone elaborate?*

GAMMA WORLD IS BACK!

I was totally psyched to see that the September/October Polyhedron mini-game was the long awaited, much anticipated d20 incarnation of Gamma World. And let me tell you, Jonathan Tweet's *Omega World* trumped my highest expectations. Mr. Tweet has listened to the masses (and probably his own muse) and boldly resurrected all the camp and madness of the earlier versions of *Gamma World*. Moreover, he did this while rendering it in a brand new variant of the d20 System. What could so easily have been a disaster is instead a resounding success. The campiness complements the rules and vice-versa. Wow!

Sure, I have complaints, but they all stem from the simple fact that the game rocks! Witness:

1) While Dungeon is printed on impressive stock for a periodical, how can I possibly use and reuse this game without it becoming a miniature shambling mound?

2) Where's the official *Omega World* character sheet? Beyond the frivolous desire for cool genre artwork, I need something quite a bit different than a D&D character sheet to keep track of the game's mutations and reserve points.

3) What about an introductory adventure or the requisite map of a vaguely recognizable, yet hideously deformed North American continent? I want it! I want it!

I know it's unreasonable to expect a magazine with a page count and a subscription price to be able to address these gripes. My only point is: the game was *that good*. I want it in a box. Any chance of that?

David Neuschulz
Chatham, NJ

Polyhedron Editor Erik Mona responds: Jonathan Tweet nailed Gamma World perfectly, so far as we're concerned, by focusing on the fun and zaniness of its original incarnation. We're both thrilled and humbled by the tremendous support the game has received in letters and on online message boards. Fans of Omega World *and any of Gamma World's many incarnations should check out* ***www.gammaworld20.com****, an online community of fellow radioactive enthusiasts.*

Now, on to your questions!

1) Magazines are meant to be read and used, my friend. I suggest buying two copies of the issue in question. Save one for "collection" purposes and use the other one in your game. If you use a magazine enough that it turns into an 8-HD plant, an extra $7.99 is a small price to pay for such a scientific marvel.

2) We started work on an Omega World *character sheet, but had to cut it at the last minute for space reasons. We're hoping to throw a bunch of Mini-Game character sheets on the* ***paizopublishing.com*** *site in short order.*

3) We simply didn't have the space to print the type of material you're requesting. Happily, there are several dozen out-of-print Gamma World supplements from previous editions of the game that contain exactly what you're looking for. Use the Omega

World rules with that material, and you should be good to go.

SPOILSPORTS

I have been a subscriber for a year and a half now, and I want to thank you for an excellent forum of great D&D adventures! I particularly like the artwork you provide. I habitually razor out the best ones as visual aides for my players. Praises all around to your artists, especially Ron Spencer, Anthony Waters, Chuck Lukacs, and Wayne Reynolds! The always superb cartography by Christopher West and others is also a bimonthly joy. Please pay them well or at least give them more corporate knickknacks like t-shirts and stuff.

Getting right to the point, although I like the art very much, I am dismayed that the new format is spoiling otherwise mega-cool artwork with what I can only term "section tabs." While they're quite handy for finding a particular adventure in a given issue, they can spoil beautiful artwork. Can't you leave them off of art pages, please? Take a look at page 14 of issue #93—it completely ruins the effect! The same is true of page 38! And you can't just cut out the adventure "stamp" without screwing up the pictures! Issue #94 has the same problem: page 16 has the name of the adventure stamped right on the door the monster is emerging from. "Uhh, guys, this is what you see . . . pay no attention to this black blob over here that I scribbled with a marker. It's just uhhh . . . a shadow . . ."

Not cool. You go to the trouble of hiring excellent artists, pay 'em, print your magazine in beautiful colors, and then ruin the pictures with tabs and page numbers! *Please* give this some attention.

James Thomas
Roseville, CA

That's an interesting idea, James. In fact, we like it so much that we've instituted the change in this very issue. See, we listen! We really do! Anyone else have some ideas regarding changes they would like to see?

PLEASE, GLANCE!

I would like to give you my opinion about the recent price increase for DUNGEON/POLYHEDRON magazines. I understand that including POLYHEDRON has caused the price to be raised . . . or possibly that DUNGEON would need a price increase anyway. Inflation does happen, and prices have to increase to match it. However, I do not agree with it. I do not read POLYHEDRON and am not interested in it. I am, in essence, paying for an additional magazine I have never even opened.

Not one issue have I even glanced at the POLYHEDRON material. It may be fine material, and I'm sure it is if it is up to DUNGEON and DRAGON *Magazine* standards, as I really enjoy those two. However, now I'm paying for something that I don't use.

Why not separate the two? It doesn't even mean any extra, expensive cover art, since you put a flip-side cover on it anyway. Then, those who were interested in POLYHEDRON could buy it. Those interested in DUNGEON could buy it. Those interested in both could buy both. Heck, you could probably even charge $5.99 for DUNGEON alone and then another $3.99 for POLYHEDRON, for a total of more than the $7.99 they are together. I think, though, that the reason this has not been done is that POLYHEDRON does not have a big enough audience to make it on its own without being attached to another magazine that has a guaranteed readership.

I don't appreciate shelling out a couple of extra bucks a month for a magazine that I'm not going to read just to get a magazine that I will read. In the future, I am seriously considering not buying either as a result. Making a buck is one thing, and it's great business and capitalism at its best to promote a product and gain some audience for it. But selling a product someone doesn't want tacked onto a product someone does and making them pay extra for it is not good business.

Calinda Lucas
Via Email

We would kindly submit that before you decide POLYHEDRON isn't worth your money that you actually look through it. If you have explored something and found it not to your liking, that's your prerogative. But to discount something outright without actually learning about it is, well, just plain silly.

MORE SUPPORT

I noticed that in the "Table Talk" column in POLYHEDRON #153, Johnny Wilson promised us a d20 Mini-Game in every issue. Although I've enjoyed a number of the Mini-Games in POLYHEDRON since it was incorporated into the pages of DUNGEON *Magazine*, perhaps it's time to give it a break and include some other content. There are a variety of d20 products on the market, and a wide variety of genres represented. Perhaps a greater variety of generic d20 content could be covered each issue with articles designed to be of use to other d20 games like *Spycraft*, *Weird Wars*, and the like—perhaps reprinting relevant bits of new Open Game Content from those games with the article. The Mini-Games are fine, but definitely have a monolithic aspect to them—either you want to play SPELLJAMMER, or you pretty much ignore that entire issue of POLYHEDRON. A greater variety of content reaching out to touch new games and not simply Wizards' out of print backlist would be a definite step forward in the open spirit of d20.

Ernest Mueller
Via Email

Erik responds: Look for Mini-Games to continue until the heat death of the universe, but that doesn't mean there won't be room for other content. We've got Call of Cthulhu and Delta Green adventures in upcoming issues, as well as more "Improved Initiative" articles that highlight d20 System innovation from the industry at large. Though we've revisited SPELLJAMMER and GAMMA WORLD in POLYHEDRON's first "new

format" year, it's worth noting that Pulp Heroes, Shadow Chasers, Thunderball Rally, *and* Mecha Crusade *are completely new, never-before-seen properties and are not based on ancient TSR or Wizards of the Coast releases. Making a third or fewer of the year's Mini-Games "throwbacks" to popular (albeit dead) settings and games strikes me as a good balance, but I'm certainly interested to hear from readers who think that's too much.*

ALL ABOUT POLY

In light of the recent publisher and price changes, I figured I'd better send in this email. For the record, the only reason I buy this magazine (and why it's the only gaming magazine to which I've ever subscribed) is because of *Polyhedron*'s d20 news, Mini-Games, and similar content. My RPGA days are behind me, and while the *Dungeon* adventures are increasingly well-crafted, I'm just not very interested in more "stock" D&D adventures, as such. Been there. Seen those. Write my own, thanks.

I'm here because of the d20 news, previews, reviews, and Mini-Games. The d20 game system presents a potentially huge creative canvas for gaming, and I'm interested in seeing what people are doing with d20 and the Open Gaming License besides standard medieval-fantasy.

I get the feeling sometimes that other readers feel as though *Polyhedron* is merely "taking space" away from *Dungeon* (even though it's been made clear that *Dungeon* has lost no pages to *Polyhedron*); I just wanted to assure Erik, and remind the publisher, that some of us out here only pay our money because of the d20 system content.

Malcolm J. MacDonald
Via Email

THE JACKAL'S REDEMPTION

BY CHAD MACPHEE AND GREG OPPEDISANO

ARTWORK BY RICHARD WHITTERS · CARTOGRAPHY BY KYLE HUNTER AND RICK ACHBERGER

Magic Items · Monsters · NPCs · Objects · Settlements · Traps

"The Jackal's Redemption" is a high-level D&D adventure designed for four 9th-level characters. The module can easily accommodate parties from 7th to 14th level using the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. The adventure begins on the road to Halea's Reach, a small town that should fit into just about any campaign. From there the adventure shifts to a erinyes's lair guarded by xills on the Bleak Eternity of Gehenna, an evil plane that neighbors both Hades and the Nine Hells. PCs who survive the adventure will be well on their way to achieving their next level. The party should include a solid fighter type who can hold his or her own in combat, and a wizard would prove quite valuable.

PREPARATION

It is recommended that you read up on the combat capabilities of xills (*Monster Manual* page 187) before playing this adventure, as their abilities can be complicated to utilize effectively in combat. You might also want to read the section on Gehenna in the *Manual of the Planes* (page 111) if you want to extend this adventure or plant the seeds for future planar adventures.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs are traveling near Halea's Reach, a small town of little renown. They notice the phasing tower of the wizard Belrath and are attacked by a gang of xills on the outskirts of town near a farm cottage.

Once in town, the characters should investigate the phasing tower in hopes of solving its mysteries. If the party needs a push, the mayor of Halea's Reach, Darwyn Hemisal, arranges to meet the characters over a meal and explain that multiarmed red "demons" appear, attack, and disappear with the people of the town in custody. The resulting fear has created a mass exodus. He explains that the "demons" began appearing when the tower started disappearing, and that the tower's owner, the resident wizard of the area named Belrath the Jackal, is also nowhere to be found. His new bride, a beautiful if reclusive woman named Kasmine, has also vanished. Two of the town's adventurers and former companions of Belrath, Calahir Olwain and Albie Chibald, entered the tower nearly a week prior and have not been seen since.

The mayor implores the party to find the missing people, destroy the red demons, and stop the tower from disappearing. The rapidly depopulating town is completely at the mercy of the xills. The mayor suggests that the PCs begin their investigation in the most obvious of places: Belrath's tower.

The PCs who attempt the tower find it protected by magical traps and the tower's remaining occupants: a flesh golem and other creatures set to guard the tower against intruders. They also encounter the bodies of the two missing adventurers who entered the tower the week before. Belrath abandoned his tower on Gehenna and issued the golem's last command, which was to defend the tower from all intruders. The PCs discover clues leading to a solution of the mysteries of the disappearing tower and begin to unravel the true identity of Belrath's bride.

The tower continues to phase between planes when the characters are inside, and at some point they probably exit on the Bleak Eternity of Gehenna. The tower appears in a large volcanic cavern that comprises the planar hideout of Kasmine, a erinyes intent on corrupting Belrath and gaining more power on the Prime Material Plane, and a small group of xills. The PCs have the opportunity to exterminate the xills and explore some of the surrounding area. With luck, they rescue and heal the egg-infested townsfolk, save the wizard Belrath, and defeat the erinyes Kasmine.

BACKGROUND

Halea's Reach is home to the talented and bold Belrath the Jackal, a wizard of much local renown. Belrath had fallen from grace since he unknowingly started associating with, and later marrying, Kasmine (a erinyes, although Belrath was certainly not aware of it at the time of the wedding). Kasmine presently has a number of plots brewing. She is "growing" a gang of xills to guard her planar hideout and aid her in other fiendish endeavors, including more martial excursions on the Prime Material Plane. At the same time, she has succeeded in partially corrupting Belrath from neutral good to chaotic neutral. She hopes to eventually either turn him evil or drive him insane, whichever proves entertaining when the time comes. The two plots were meshing nicely when Kasmine realized that she needed a steady supply of living hosts for the eggs of her xill guards.

Kasmine also needed time to corrupt Belrath and find a way for the spellcaster to travel the planes without making him suspicious by using her power. She told Belrath she was planetouched and that her mother was imprisoned on Gehenna. Belrath's good nature was easily led to want to help this beautiful young lady reunite with her mother. From there Kasmine manipulated him away from his friends and community using her seductive charisma, which Belrath took for love, and led him on a series of quests to find a scroll of *planeshift*. Each quest required Belrath to engage in activities that slowly eroded his moral outlook and ethical standards, resulting in a gradual alignment shift.

Finally, Kasmine "found" an *amulet of the planes* and took it to her husband. Belrath, his newly inflated ego interfering with his judgement, insisted on using a scroll of *planeshift* to determine the precise location of their destination. When reading the scroll, Belrath made a critical misreading that caused the entire tower to begin phasing between the planes. The tower began to act as a gateway between Haley's Reach on the Prime Material Plane and Kasmine's hideout in some caverns on Gehenna.

Meanwhile, the xills employed by Kasmine were up to their own mischief. The xills' paternal instincts had got the better of them, and under the direction of Kasmine began looking for for their eggs. They followed the phasing tower, a nesting beacon of sorts, back to Halea's Reach, where they started abducting townsfolk to use for just such a purpose.

As the adventurers arrive in Halea's Reach, Kasmine is in the final stages of her plan with Belrath the Jackal. Belrath, upon arriving on Gehenna, saw Kasmine amid the xills and realized his mistakes. Too late and too weak to undo his actions, Kasmine captured him and is forcing him to watch xills being birthed from the captured townsfolk in an attempt to drive him insane for her own amusement.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs arrive in the town of Halea's Reach, an average sort of place except for the wizard's tower cresting the large hill north of the town that continues to eerily phase in and out of view. Halea's Reach has at least one other problem: Shortly after the tower started phasing, people started disappearing. The disappearances were bad enough, but what really frightened the residents of Halea's Reach were the creatures behind the disappearances—they appeared, grabbed people, and then vanished with them in broad daylight.

The adventure begins when the PCs have nearly arrived at the village. The season is not important to the plot, but the weather should be clear so that the characters can see the phasing tower on the hill at a reasonable distance from the town. The tower atop the hill is 120 feet tall and visible from a distance of at least ten miles from the town. The tower phases like clockwork from the Prime Material Plane to Gehenna every 3 minutes.

From the High Priest's highway, the town of Halea's Reach is visible from miles away. Travelers on the road would tell you that the first sign you are nearing the tiny town is when you catch sight of the magnificent tower that lights the crest of the hill on which Halea's Reach is situated. A slender spiraling structure that glitters like alabaster in the setting sun, the tower is home to a local hero named Belrath The Jackal.

The rolling hills give way to pastures and small farms separated by low stone walls constructed to keep livestock out of crops and neighboring fields. As your party crests a low hill, the tower comes into sight and moments later phases out of view with a shimmer. Stunned, you watch as the tower reappears minutes later only to disappear again in a disturbing cycle.

The shrill screams of a woman break the peaceful silence. They emanate from a field near one of the cottages near the road. You catch a glimpse of five red-scaled, fearsome humanoids, each with four arms, racing toward a farmhouse while panicked country folk run toward the relative safety of the structures.

Creatures: When the characters first see the tower disappear and then reappear, it signals an attack on the nearby farm by a gang of xills. The farmhouse is 200 feet from the characters when they spot the first xills.

Xills (2): hp 28, 31; *Monster Manual* 187.

Possessions: In addition to the weaponry carried by the xills (see the *Monster Manual* entry), each of the creatures wears a small iron key attached to a leather thong around its neck (see area **12** for details).

Tactics: On the first round, three of the four locals reach the farmhouse and bar the door before the xills reach it.

On the second round, the xills arrive at the door and begin attempting to break it down. One of the xills captures the fourth peasant, a young boy, and immediately planewalks to Kasmine's hideout on Gehenna. The remaining xills take 3 additional rounds to break into the farmhouse, giving the PCs 5 rounds to respond and reach the creatures before the inhabitants of the house are attacked and spirited away. It is highly unlikely that the PCs can rescue the boy before he is planewalked away, but it is possible. The conversation with the farmers after the battle should be modified accordingly if the boy is rescued.

Any move by the PCs toward the house results in the xills turning and attacking the PCs. The xills are hunting for easy prey to implant with their eggs, so they're not interested in capturing the PCs. They'd much rather slay the characters for interfering. Having successfully captured one host for their eggs already, the xills also already consider their mission a success. When the creatures spot the PCs approaching, they cease their battering of the farmhouse and immediately fire a volley of arrows (each xill has two longbows) before closing to melee. The xills engage the party for the pure pleasure of battle, but if they are overmatched and their lives are in danger, they *planeshift* home.

Development: If the party successfully defeats or drives off the xills, the farm family emerges to introduce themselves and thank the party for saving them. They're obviously frantic about the missing youth, however. If the PCs question the farmers, the villagers can provide some of the information from the "Background" section. The following list of questions are likely to be posed by the PCs; the farmers answer them to the best of their ability.

• What were those red things? How long has this been going on?

"The red devils started appearing two weeks ago. They appear out of thin air and kidnap locals, often in daylight. Now they've taken our son Hal!"

• What can you tell us about the disappearing tower?

"The tower started doing that the night Belrath the Jackal disappeared. No one knows why, and everyone is too afraid to investigate."

• Who is Belrath the Jackal?

"He's a local who became a mighty spellcaster and hero. Belrath retired from his adventuring career, built his magnificent tower, and began helping out around the area whenever he could. He disappeared with his new bride the night the tower started to disappear and reappear."

• All other questions:

"We don't know. Perhaps Mayor Darwyn could tell you. Do you know where those devils have taken our son? What will happen to him? Is he going to die?"

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"The Jackal's Redemption" is designed to challenge four 9th-level PCs, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

5th- and 6th-level PCs: The adventure is too challenging for characters of this level as written. Run the adventure with the following changes.

• Make Klithirza (area **5**) a kyton. This makes the encounter EL 6.

• Make the smoke paraelemental (area **6**) huge (as opposed to elder). This makes this encounter EL 7.

• Reduce the number of magma mephits in area **7** to three.

• Make Caldre (area **8**) a 2nd-level cleric, and make the fire elemental Medium-size instead of Large.

• Drop one mezzoloth from area **10**.

• Reduce the number of xill in area **12** by two.

• Make Kasmine a 2nd-level sorcerer (area **13**) and reduce the number of her imp pets by three and delay the xill reinforcements by 3 rounds.

7th- and 8th-level PCs: The adventure is nearly suitable as written for characters of this level. Some areas do need alteration, however.

• Klithirza should remain a narzugon, but have the PCs encounter the devil without a mount.

• Make the paraelemental greater instead of elder.

• Leave Caldre as written, but reduce the size of the fire elemental to Medium-size.

• Instead of encountering two mezzoloths in area **10**, place one mezzoloth and one barbazu or canoloth (*Manual of the Planes* page 187).

• Make Kasmine a 3rd- or 4th-level sorcerer, depending on how savvy your party's tactics are. Reduce the number of her imp pets by one and delay the xill reinforcements by 2 rounds.

10th- and 11th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written. If the PCs aren't challenged enough, add a few more xills, give Kasmine a 1–2 more sorcerer levels, and consider adding another mid-CR devil to area **5**.

12th- and 13th-level PCs: The adventure is probably too easy for characters of this level as written. Consider the following alterations.

• Make the flesh golem in the tower a clay golem (or add a second flesh golem).

• Add a second narzugon to area **5**.

• Add 3–4 cleric levels to Caldre, and make the fire elemental in the temple huge.

• Make Kasmine a 9th-level sorcerer, and give all the xills 1st- or 2nd-level fighters. You might also consider giving Kasmine a less powerful devil bodyguard, such as a barbazu with a few fighter or barbarian levels.

In the unlikely event the PCs stop the abduction, the farmers explain that this is the first time someone has been rescued from the "red devils." They encourage the party to enter Halea's Reach and see Mayor Darwyn.

HALEA'S REACH

The town of Halea's Reach is not unusual when compared to most country farming hamlets in this area. Small hold farms circle the town proper in a radiating spiral of patchwork fields. Houses made primarily of fieldstone roofed in a thick thatch hunker cheerfully amid cottage gardens of herbs, vegetables, and a few flowers. You notice that many of the cottages have been boarded up, their doors and shutters nailed closed with rough-hewn planking. Still other homes have been burned out, their thick roofs of thatch now gone, leaving dark, shadowed windows that stare out at you like mournful eyes. The few visible townsfolk in the streets seem excited by your appearance and watch you hopefully as you pass.

Several small businesses and homes sit in a square about a central court, the focal point of which is the town's well. These look a bit more prosperous; many have two or even three levels with dressed stone lintels and windowsills. The wizard's tower on the hill continues to appear and disappear eerily, but the residents seem to take no notice of it. A large stone building to the west of the central court resembles an inn, with a rough lean-to stable attached behind. Farther past the inn is a series of tightly packed buildings resembling an open marketplace.

♛ **Halea's Reach (Small Town):** Conventional; NG; 800 gp limit; Assets 60,000 (presently 30,000); population 1,500 (presently 750) (79% human, 9% halfling, 5% elf, 3% dwarf, 2% gnome, 1% half-elf, 1% half-orc).

Authority Figure: Mayor Darwyn Hemisal, male human Ari4.

Important Characters: Belrath the Jackal, male human, Wiz8; Sheriff Bae Relkin, male human Ftr4; High Cleric Cedras Arpad Clr5 (Pelor); Innkeeper Algar Korvath dwarf Ftr3; Calahir Olwain, female elf Ftr4/Rog3 (missing); Albie Chibald, male halfling Rog4/Sor2 (missing).

Notes: Halea's Reach has all the standard features of a town its size, including two large inns, a small jail and municipal building, a small church of Pelor, a shrine of Heironeous, an open farmers and traders market, a smithy, a leatherworker, an armorer, and a general supplies store.

The PCs' arrival in Halea's Reach causes quite a stir among the remaining residents. About half of the townsfolk have fled because of raiding xills who have captured several dozen people and *planeshifted* them away. The few who remain are generally terrified and have stayed because they have nowhere else to turn. The PCs are greeted as heroes; the townsfolk assume that the adventurers are here because they heard about the "red demons."

Word spreads quickly, and wherever the PCs go anxious townsfolk greet them. If the characters do not interact with the townsfolk, you might choose to have the mayor of Halea's Reach seek them out in person. Darwyn Hemisal, the mayor, introduces himself and attempts to determine the PCs' intentions in town. He also hopes that they might be capable of helping Halea's Reach with its problem.

Mayor Hemisal can provide the following information if asked (this information is also available from various merchants and townsfolk with successful Gather Information checks):

The tower (DC 10): "The tower began disappearing and reappearing the day Belrath the Jackal was supposed to conduct some big experiment. Belrath had been preparing for months for the experiment, and he hasn't been seen since that day."

Belrath's new bride (DC 15): "Belrath recently married the beautiful and charming Kasmine, a long time friend and confidant. She supported and encouraged Belrath in his endeavors. She vanished too."

The red demons (DC 10): "The red demons began kidnapping people shortly after the tower started its crazy flickering."

Belrath's experiment (DC 20): "Belrath warned the townsfolk not to disturb him, but after the demons began appearing, the adventurers Calahir Olwain and Albie Chibald entered the tower to find out what was going on. Now they've gone missing too."

The missing adventurers (DC 15): "Calahir Olwain and Albie Chibald were adventuring friends of Belrath. They both were concerned about how Belrath was behaving and worried that his experiments were becoming too dangerous."

Belrath's behavior (DC 25): "Belrath withdrew in recent months and came to answer a summons at his door less frequently each week, it seemed. Whatever he was working on, it sure seemed to consume his time and energy."

Neither Hemisal nor any other citizen of Halea's Reach knows what would best help the town at this point, although no on really thinks Belrath had anything to do with the appearance of the red demons. They still think far too highly of the missing wizard. If pressed, the most anyone is willing to speculate is that the demons must have been watching the town for a while, and only chose to strike once the town's guardian vanished.

THE WIZARD'S TOWER

When the PCs finally decide to investigate Belrath's tower, read or paraphrase the following:

The slender circular wizard's tower stretches over 100 feet into the sky. It is made of expertly fitted granite blocks, so masterfully constructed that they hardly betray the joints between the stones. A 15-foot-high wrought iron fence marks the tower grounds; tall shrubbery grows on the inside to keep prying eyes out. The fence itself is hand-wrought and set with various runes and magical symbols.

Planted in a double row along the inside of the tower fence are thorny shrubs that twist and tangle together, effectively forming a barrier to all but the most nimble assailants. The shrubs flower profusely with cascading blooms of purple and white fragrant blossoms. As you watch, the tower itself ripples and fades from view, leaving the fenced area and grounds quite empty except for a circular spot of hard stone that seems to smolder and hiss alarmingly. Three minutes later, the tower reappears in exactly the same spot it left. The gate to the tower grounds is a large wrought iron affair bearing a glowing rune surrounded by the heads of three grinning jackals. A bent lockpick protrudes from the gate keyhole and the gate itself, left open and presumably unattended, sways ominously in the breeze.

Calahir Olwain and Albie Chibald left the lockpick when they entered Belrath's Tower to find out what happened to their friend. The door is open and can be pushed inward to gain access to area 1. As the tower phases back and forth between the Prime Material Plane and Gehenna, a ring of displaced hot stone from Kasmine's hideout appears on that spot and begins to rapidly cool, giving off fumes and a small amount of smoke.

Remember that the tower phases every 3 minutes. The plane that the tower is on has no effect on the encounters in the tower but if the characters wish to explore Kasmine's hideout in Gehenna they have to step out of the tower when it is present on that plane.

1. THE GROUNDS (EL VARIABLE)

A dense row of intertwining shrubbery prevents you from seeing past the walled structure surrounding the tower grounds. Wicked looking thorns lie barely visible beneath the leaves, their scarlet tips gleaming with a waxy texture. A winding path of crushed white stone leads from the open gate toward the front door of the tower proper. Gently winding herb gardens and various exotic-looking plants hedge the pathway, separating it from the lawn that predominates the area around the base of the building. A few large trees, planted strategically to provide shade and block the wind, sway and rustle softly in the light breeze, but hardly any other sounds can be heard within this walled courtyard.

The vegetation in a ring nearest the tower is brown and dead, as if dried or burned by great heat. On the path in front of the door lie two bent and broken bodies: one of a female elf and the other a male halfling. The bodies appear as though they had taken a terrible pounding before they succumbed to the afterlife. Purpling contusions cover their limp and inert forms, yet they seem not to have been robbed or looted, as their gear remains with the bodies. The door to the tower is made of solid steel engraved with the same rune present upon the outer iron gate. Several bent lockpicks protrude from the door's keyhole.

The two adventurers are Calahir Olwain and Albie Chibald. They knew the passwords to the two traps ("Enimsak" and "Cease and Desist" respectively) but were slain by the flesh golem standing guard just inside the door of the tower (area **2**).

Traps (EL 3 and EL 6): The door of the tower is unlocked but still has two active magical traps on it. Belrath placed the traps on the door to secure his tower before beginning his planar travel experiments. The first trap is a sleep trap intended to deter townsfolk. It affects the 10-foot square area before the front door. Those affected fall asleep for 2 hours and can't be awakened by anything short of a successful *dispel magic* or similar magic.

The second trap is more powerful magic. Intended to drive off more determined intruders, this cone of fire is potentially deadly.

Sleep Trap: CR 3; 10 ft. by 10 ft. area in front of door causes character to fall asleep for 2 hours (caster level 8th); Will (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 25).

Flame Jet Trap: CR 6; cone of flame (8d6); Reflex (DC 18) half; Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 25).

Treasure: On Calahir Olwain's body, the PCs find *+1 studded leather armor, dust of disappearance* (2 doses), a short-sword, 54 gp, and 122 sp. On Albie Chibald, the PCs find a *potion of detect thoughts*, a *ring of feather falling*, a quarterstaff, his robes, 136 gp, and Albie's personal journal.

The journal is a personal account of Albie's adventures with Calahir and Belrath. After the furious battle and the ensuing weather, the journal has been mostly destroyed. Few remaining entries are decipherable. If the party takes the time to read the remnants of the journal, they find out the information below. Many entries, incomplete and out of context, make little sense. But others seem to have relevance to their present quest.

Early Entry: This refers to the early careers of the adventuring trio as they fought and protected their town from the ravages of nearby outlaws.

Calahair, Belrath, and I recently returned to a heroes' welcome in Halea's Reach after our battles with the goblins of the nearby Stone Hills. We successfully foiled their devious plans to disrupt trade into the town and followed the raiding party we located back to their lair. We infiltrated the hideout with little difficulty but were discovered just before we could execute the ambush . . .

Later Entry: This passage refers to the meeting of Belrath and Kasmine, followed by the disbanding of the trio. Albie clearly dislikes and distrusts Kasmine. Belrath continues to grow in power while traveling to unknown locals with his new beau, while Albie and Calahir languish in Halea's Reach. Belrath then builds his tower.

Belrath has left us today to follow the lead of Kasmine. I do not trust that one, for she promises much and seems to deliver little, if anything at all. When she appeared at our sides to take down Krr'tesh, the great troll who had cornered us in an abandoned millhouse, we accepted her aid freely, although lately I have noticed that she prefers to solve issues with blades, rather than wits. Mercy comes not often from her . . . I fear that her silver tongue and amazing looks have smitten Belrath. He is not normally so impulsive as to dissolve our relationship on a whim. He has even begun construction of a . . .

More Recent Entry: Albie believes Belrath has been on adventures to gain the components necessary to build a planeshifting portal powerful enough to travel the planes freely. Albie does not know why Belrath wants to leave the Prime Material Plane so badly. Belrath's personality also begins to change. He is more withdrawn, more obsessed about Kasmine, and less friendly to those who care most for him. Albie and Calahir are suspicious of Kasmine's influence and motives. Then Belrath marries Kasmine.

The Jackal returned today—three weeks he was gone and not even word of his departure did he leave with us. As we watch him on his travels it seems he grows strong in magic, and his obsession with the planes grows more alarming. It seems as though each adventure he goes on brings him back a crueler man. The witch, as we have begun to name her, is always at his side whispering something in his ear. He has even begun to speak of marriage, although admittedly we have heard no such comments from Kasmine. He rarely visits anymore, and we feel uncomfortable in the tower, as if he does not wish our presence.

Latest Entry: Albie and Calahir investigate Kasmine's personal history and cannot find any evidence that supports the stories she tells about where she is from and her

family or friends. Suspicious, they follow her into the woods one night and observe her speaking in a strange language to a small, multiarmed red creature. They confront Belrath with their stories; the three argue and the friendship between the wizard and his former companions ends. The experiment takes place and the tower begins appearing and disappearing; Albie and Calahir resolve to enter the tower to help their old friend.

We decided to investigate further into the history of the witch. Her stories don't seem to match what we know of her personality. We traveled to High Hold far to the north where she told us she grew up. No one there knew of her and the drawing Calahir made met with blank stares and shrugs. We have been watching her more closely of late and wondering on her resolve to find a conduit to another plane. She gave Belrath a big, fleshy, vaguely lifelike statue for their wedding—a horrid gift. I really would rather not know where she located all of the parts necessary to construct the gruesome thing, or if she purchased it, who the sculpture was. We are resolved to follow her on one of her late-night forays into the wood. An old ranger, admittedly in his cups at the time but otherwise reliable, told us that he saw her meet with a strange hooded figure that spoke in a bizarre . . .

2. STUDY (EL 7)

Through the now open door you can see a well-appointed and comfortable study. The room is well lit and strangely warm for a place with no obvious source of heat. A smoothly polished floor of plank hardwood is mostly covered with woven rugs. Two large, carved wooden tables sit in the room. The first, in the southwest corner, is surrounded by wooden chairs of simple design. The second table rests in the northwest corner and is flanked by a pair of padded benches. Both tables are covered in books, scrolls, scraps of paper, and quills.

The walls are hung with tapestries depicting scenes of a strange world, composed mainly of large floating islands suspended magically in midair. Dozens of even stranger flying creatures circle and wheel about on the air currents. The tapestries have been woven of thick wool interspersed with strands of glittering silk and other fibers that cause them to shimmer as your eye passes over them.

Two partially enclosed libraries branch off in the southeast and northwest corners.

Opposite you stands a grotesque statue that appears to be made of a patchwork assortment of different humanoid body parts. Before you can consider the thing further, however, it begins to move quickly in your direction, raising its arms to strike.

A successful Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 20) reveals that nearly all the material scattered about the room deals with planar travel.

Creature: Belrath's study is guarded by a flesh golem—a wedding gift to him from Kasmine. The golem received its last instructions to guard the tower against all intruders as Belrath left the tower to meet Kasmine in her hideout on Gehenna. The golem has already killed Albie and Calahir.

Flesh Golem: hp 55; *Monster Manual* 108.

Tactics: The golem lashes out with its slam attacks as soon as the PCs open the door . The golem tries to remain in the doorway, limiting the party's ability to flank it.

Treasure: Several items of interest can be found in the study. If the party succeeds at a Search check (DC 15), they find a small book entitled "Caring for Your Flesh Golem" on the southeast table. The inside cover of the book reads: "For Belrath, my dearest. A reward on the eve of our great triumph and a gift for our wedding. Love Kasmine." The book has detailed instructions on maintaining a flesh golem and is worth 250 gp to an interested wizard or collector.

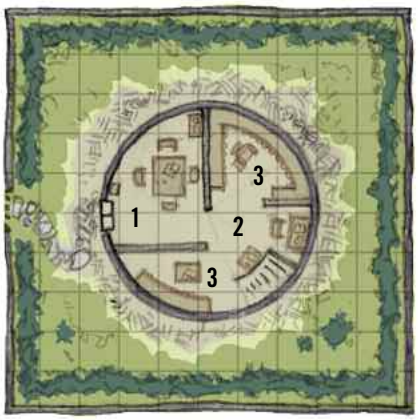
A successful Search check also turns up several books entitled: "Constructing Stands to Hold Crystal Balls," "On Blowing and Polishing Orbs," and "Fargrahinir's Forging Amulets." Each of the books is worth 250 gp and provides a +5 bonus to skill checks to craft these items.

If the PCs' Search check exceeds DC 20, the PCs find a note in the cushions of a bench at the northeast table that reads, "Belrath, my love. I have found the amulet we need in order to travel to other planes. I can't tell you how lucky I feel to have such a brave man as my new husband and how much I look forward to taking you to meet my mother and helping her escape the Bleak Eternity. We will show those small town fools who thought you too incompetent to achieve such greatness. Love, Kasmine."

3. LIBRARIES

Paneled in dark walnut, these rooms are quite shadowy, but kept scrupulously clean and free of dust, as if owned by one who knows full well the value of books and how to care for them. Both rooms are full of shelves and leather-bound books in all sizes and colors. A short stepladder sits to one side for retrieving books from higher shelves. Stairs in the northeast corner lead up into the tower.

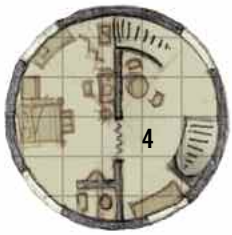
The libraries are split into these cozy reading rooms to provide separate readers with some privacy, if it's necessary. Retreating here, as with anywhere in the tower, doesn't prevent the flesh golem from following; only leaving the tower entirely is a safe way to flee from the creature.



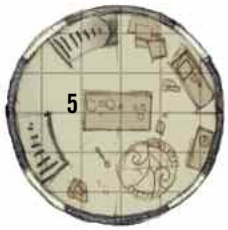
GROUND FLOOR

Belrath's Tower

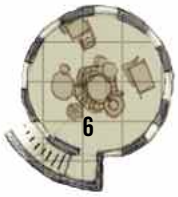
One square=5 feet



SLEEPING QUARTERS



LABORATORY



OBSERVATORY

Treasure: The libraries contain a number of books and scrolls on a variety of topics the do not impact the adventure. Feel free to plant any sort of text plot point that might be important to your campaign here. Belrath, as described, has traveled throughout the planes, and virtually any sort of information you can imagine could feasibly be found here. A Search check (DC 20) turns up an arcane scroll of *magic circle against evil*, *haste*, *dispel magic*, and *fly* (caster level 8th).

4. SLEEPING QUARTERS

The stairs lead into a small chamber ringed with diaphanous hangings of silk and lace that give the chamber a feminine touch. Plush carpets of finely woven wool line the floor, set to keep out the chill and provide comfort to bare feet. A tapestry runs about the room, depicting pastoral scenes from the quiet life of a country farm. A huge chest of mirrored drawers sprawls across one corner of the room, and a large, luxuriously dressed oval bed and an elaborately carved armoire round out the rest of the furnishings. The bed is piled high with pillows and down-filled blankets, but it has been left in disarray.

A few scattered pieces of clothing, both male and female, lie about on the furniture. In another corner of the room a set of stairs curves up. A round window is covered by closed iron shutters.

The sleeping chamber is in disarray since Belrath and Kasmine left abruptly when the tower began to phase between the planes. Kasmine had her gang of xills ambush Belrath as they began to "explore" the new locale. They took him to the hideout and quickly began harvesting the villagers and implanting them with eggs.

The shutters can be opened without effort. If the tower is on the Prime Material Plane, refer to the description of the grounds under area **1** to describe the view. If the tower is on Gehenna then refer to the description of the cavern in area **7** to describe the view from the bedroom.

Treasure: Belrath and Kasmine both reside here when on the Prime Material Plane. On top of the dressing table sits a chest containing a variety of jewelry, including: a platinum ring (300 gp), earrings (50 gp), gold necklace (150 gp), and a silver necklace (20 gp). The armoire is filled with robes and dresses, and a secret compartment in the back of the armoire (Search DC 20) contains a *wand of knock* (caster level 5th, 23 charges).

5. THE LABORATORY (EL 9)

Beyond the final bend in the staircase you see a workshop and laboratory. The perimeter walls of the chamber are lined with many wooden shelves, all crammed with paraphernalia of the arcanist's trade. One section holds many glass jars, each containing various dead and preserved specimens of strange and unusual creatures. A lifesize drawing of the human body hangs from one wall, cut away to show the internal organs and vascular structure beneath the skin. A large countertop of shiny steel predominates one section of the curving wall. An array of winding tubes and bulbous vials and beakers sits upon it, set out in a series of stations.

Several glass jars on metal stands look to contain substances that have burned beyond use, crusted to the bottom of their containers and exuding an unpleasant acrid odor throughout the entire room.

A number of large, leather-bound tomes lie about on the counters, their pages crawling with indecipherable arcane formulae and diagrams of unrecognizable structures.

In one corner sits a large chalkboard affixed to a movable stand. A strange collection of notes and calculations are scrawled across its surface. The room also holds an elaborate stand with a large glass ball perched on it. The stand is made of solid pewter inlaid with streaks and curlicues of silver and semi-precious gems. It is crafted to hold the ball firmly in an upright position and features a variety of metal cogs and levers.

The base of the stand is decorated with several leering jackals, noses pointed to the sky. An elaborate chalked pentagram has been scribed upon the floor of the chamber, arcane symbols precisely inscribed at the apex of each point of the diagram. To the side, the staircase continues into the heights of the tower.

Belrath has been unable to return to his lab, and the potions he was concocting have all burned and are now useless. A Search check (DC 18) reveals that the burned jars on the metal workbench were once suspended over candles that have burned down to tabletop level. This seems to indicate that whatever experiments were in progress here were abandoned.

A full week has passed since the disappearance of the wizard, and the lab is untouched. The crystal ball apparatus is incomplete, but the PCs can remove it and the few components not yet attached from the tower if they wish. If they succeed in rescuing Belrath he is not pleased at the loss of his valuable equipment and likely reacts negatively to the party upon returning home. The glassware is mostly ruined and of no value.

Characters who read the chalkboard can make a successful Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 15). Success indicates the character knows that Belrath was preparing a scroll of *planeshift* to pinpoint his planned travel to Gehenna. Another Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 30) reveals that the phasing of the tower might have been caused by just such a scroll being miscast.

Creatures: Kasmine left a devilish ally here to stop intruders who might manage to vanquish the flesh golem downstairs. Klithirza, a narzugon devil and its fiendish dire boar mount have probably already heard the PCs downstairs in the study, and the two creatures have been waiting for the interlopers to show themselves since. In such a case, the Baatorian visitors are crouched behind the chalkboard in the corner. If the PCs were particularly silent for some reason, the narzugon is dismounted and speaking to its mount in Infernal, calming it in anticipation for the battle both creatures hope is coming.

Klithirza, Narzugon: CR 9; Medium-size Outsider (evil, lawful); HD 10d8+10; hp 55; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 25, touch 12, flat-footed 23; Atk +17/+12 melee (1d8+7/crit ×3, heavy lance) or +16/+11 melee (1d6+5/crit 19–20 ×4, heavy pick); SA baleful gaze, spell-like abilities, summon baatezu; SQ damage reduction 20/+2, baatezu qualities; SR 23; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +8; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 19.

Skills: Intimidate +17, Knowledge (the planes) +13, Ride +15, Search +14, Sense Motive +14, Spot +14, Wilderness +14. *Feats:* Improved Critical (heavy pick), Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack.

Baleful Gaze (Su): Those who see the narzugon's unmasked face see their own worst fears reflected in its eyes. As they hold its gaze, the fearsome image grows like a hallucination until it blocks out reality completely. The baleful gaze functions as a *phantasmal killer* spell cast by a 10th-level sorcerer (save DC 18) against all within 30 feet.

Spell-like Abilities: At will—*desecrate, doom, hold person, produce flame, suggestion*; 1/day—*order's wrath* or *unholy blight*. Caster level 10th; save DC = 14 + spell level.

At will, a narzugon can *teleport without error* on itself and its mount as the spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer.

Summon Baatezu (Sp): Once per day, the narzugon can attempt to summon 1d3 erinyes or another narzugon with a 30% chance of success.

Possessions: +2 heavy lance, gauntlets of ogre power +2, two *potions of cure moderate wounds,* spiked plate mail, small steel shield, masterwork heavy pick,

Fiendish Dire Boar: CR 5; Medium-size Outsider; HD 7d8+21; hp 52; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Atk +12 melee (1d8+12, bite); Face 5 ft. by 10 ft.; SA ferocity, smite good; SQ darkvision 60 ft., cold and fire resistance 10, damage reduction 5/+2, scent; SR 14; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 27, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 3, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills: Listen +9, Spot +8.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, the fiendish dire board can make a normal attack to deal an additional 7 points of damage against a good foe.

Tactics: If the narzugon catches the PCs unawares, it uses its *unholy blight* ability in the surprise round. In the round following, it steps out from behind the chalkboard, astride its mount, and uses its baleful gaze on anyone in the room. Klithirza then charges into battle, wielding its lance unless disarmed, using its *teleport* ability if it or its mount are reduced to fewer than 10 hit points. The devil doesn't attempt to summon other baatezu, since it's not exactly acting with the approval of some of Baator's more powerful devils in aiding Kasmine.

If caught by surprise, Klithirza uses its first action to mount its dire boar and use its baleful gaze. It then proceeds to attack with its *+2 heavy lance.*

Treasure: The stand and glass are components of a partially completed crystal ball and a few unattached components. The crystal ball is not functioning and on closer examination, a successful Craft (blacksmithing) check (DC 10) reveals that the stand is capable of moving the ball effortlessly through 360 degrees. An Appraise check (DC 16) reveals that the stand would be worth 500 gp to an interested buyer.

6. THE OBSERVATORY (EL VARIABLE)

A trapdoor opens to this small observatory high upon the topmost part of Belrath's tower. This circular chamber is open to the sky above, and a number of crenelations in the exterior wall permit differing views of the night sky. A large brass astrolabe of curious design

dominates the center of the observatory. It has been bolted firmly to the floor and a number of short benches surround it so as to provide a place for an observer to sit while studying the stars. The room is otherwise quite barren of furnishings and other implements, probably because it is so exposed to the weather.

From the observatory, the characters have a perfect view of the town while on the Prime Material Plane, as the tower rests atop a high hill to the north of Halea's Reach.

On Gehenna, the view is much more disturbing. Bleak cavern walls surround the tower at a distance of no more than 15–20 feet and swirling smoke obscures most of the ceiling. The astrolabe is an extremely heavy and complicated apparatus, weighing nearly 500 pounds and bolted securely to the stones of the tower floor. It cannot be removed without great effort, and would likely be destroyed or severely damaged in the attempt.

Creatures: The observatory is the only location in Belrath's tower that could feature one of two possible scenarios, depending on which plane the tower resides when the PCs reach this location. On the Prime Material Plane, no creature threatens the PCs in the observatory unless they've fled here with some guardian of the tower in pursuit. But if the PCs arrive in this chamber after the tower has shifted to Gehenna, they encounter one of Kasmine's allies: an elder smoke paraelemental.

Elder Smoke Paraelemental: CR 11; Huge Elemental (air, fire); HD 24d8+96; hp 102; Init +15; Spd fly 90 ft. (good); AC 27, flat-footed 16, touch 19; Atk +27+22/+17/+12 melee (2d4+9, claws); Face/Reach 10 ft. by 5 ft./15 ft.; SA smoke claws; SQ damage reduction 15/+3, elemental; AL N; Fort +12, Ref +25, Will +8; Str 22, Dex 33, Con 18, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +26, Spot +26. *Feats:* Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Weapon Finesse (claw).

Smoke Claws (Ex): A smoke paraelemental can engulf opponents by moving on top of them. It fills the air around one opponent smaller than it is without provoking an attack of opportunity. The target must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 29) or inhale part of the creature. Smoke inside the victim solidifies into a claw or talon and begins to rip at the surrounding organs, dealing double the paraelemental's claw damage automatically. The affected creature can attempt another Fortitude save each subsequent round to cough out the semivaporous menace.

Tactics: The paraelemental was called and bound by a sorcerer who owed Kasmine a debt. It enjoys Gehenna, though, due to the heavy smoke and areas of intense heat. In combat, the paraelemental tries to surprise the first opponent it sees with its smoke claws, ripping him apart from the inside out. It remains flying above its foes at all times, gaining the +1 higher ground bonus to attacks, and resorts to normal claw attacks if its smoke claw attack is rebuffed. The paraelemental flees the area if reduced to 20 or fewer hit points. Although it enjoys the opportunities inherent with working for Kasmine, it's not willing to die for her.

Development: If the PCs never enter the observatory while the tower is in Gehenna, the paraelemental attacks the characters as they initially exit the tower on that plane.

KASMINE'S HIDEOUT

Belrath's tower phases every 3 minutes between the town of Halea's Reach on the Prime Material Plane and Kasmine's hideout on Gehenna. The PCs need only step out of the tower in either locale to travel to that location.

Kasmine's lair is located in a small, isolated cavern structure in the Bleak Eternity of Gehenna. Bordering both Hades and the Nine Hells—Kasmine's native plane—Gehenna is a plane of dangerous volcanoes and

GEHENNA TRAITS

The Bleak Eternity of Gehenna is a fiery, deadly place full of floating earthbergs and the evil yugoloths. Linked to both the Nine Hells of Baator and the Gray Waste of Hades, this is a plane few mortals enjoy visiting for long.

Gehenna has the following traits:

- **Normal Gravity.** Gravity is similar to the Material Plane, but naturally occurring volcanic mountains seem to float free in an infinitely large void. Gravity is normal on the steep slopes of a mountain, and a fall tumbles victims many miles until a chance ledge catches them, or continued rolling abrasions of the fall completely shred the victim.
- **Normal Time.**
- **Infinite Size:** The impenetrable void of Gehenna is infinite, but each volcanic mountain is finite. Each is far larger than the largest known land mass on the Material Plane, however.
- **Divinely Morphic:** Ordinary creatures find Gehenna as alterable as the Material Plane.
- **No Elemental or Energy Traits.**
- **Mildly Evil-Aligned:** Good characters on Gehenna suffer a –2 penalty on all Charisma-based checks.
- **Normal Magic.**

While full of adventure opportunity for characters of this level, if you plan on running further adventures on Gehenna, it's best if you consult the *Manual of the Planes* for more information.

the home of the dreaded yugoloths. Some of these creatures, in fact, created Kasmine's small complex in return for a few souls she'd captured eons ago. The smoke of Gehenna swirls above the open chambers of areas **7**, **12**, and the balcony in room **10**. The tower has come to rest here, fused to the rock of this cavern. A few scraggly shrubs and a narrow swath of lawn have been displaced from the Prime Material; the vegetation is now burned and blackened from the constant heat.

Kasmine selected Gehenna from which to base her excursions into the Prime Material Plane since it prevented the meddling of other devils from her home plane of Baator. She found that all too often, the souls she corrupted went to more powerful devils. Fed up with the strict hierarchy of the Nine Hells, she views her seduction of Belrath and dealings with the xills as not only a pleasant diversion, but the continuation of a long-term plan to become strong enough to return to Baator and actually make a bid for serious power.

For the purpose of this adventure, all the action takes place in Kasmine's hideout. The characters can use this cavern complex as a jump off point for exploring the planes. If the characters enter the vastness of Gehenna, they run the risk of encountering all sorts of creatures that could pose a serious threat to characters of this level. The landscape of Gehenna is deadly in its own right, composed of steep, precarious slopes, massive cliffs, and fiery volcanoes. See the "Gehenna Traits" sidebar for more information on the plane.

HEAT DANGERS

Kasmine's lair is very hot, as are many of the regions of Gehenna. These conditions mean that characters must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 for each previous check) each hour or sustain 1d4 points of subdual damage. Other penalties might apply if the PCs spend any length of time in the area. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 86, for more details on extreme heat.

MAGMA

Total immersion in molten rock is potentially deadly, even for 9th-level characters. Fortunately, the magma streams in Kasmine's lair aren't that deep, averaging only 5–6 inches deep throughout. Should a PC fall off one of the islands or stone bridges, she takes 2d6 points of damage per round of exposure. Even after leaving the magma, the damage continues to accumulate, albeit at half the rate. So once a character leaves the magma, she takes 1d6 points of damage for 1d3 rounds.

Immunity or resistance to heat or fire protects a character from damage from lava, although items immersed in the substance might still be damaged or destroyed. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 89, for more details on lava.

7. THE CAVERN (EL 8)

Belrath's Tower is now present in a large, rough-hewn cavern of volcanic stone. Wild striations of red, orange, and gray crawl about the cavern walls and ceiling, creating a crazed and crisscrossing pattern that tricks the eye into believing the walls are moving. Smoke sifts and swirls about the cavern, seemingly moving of its own will, as no wind can be detected here. Heat presses against your skin in waves, emanating from the very rock about you. The temperature of

the cavern is uncomfortably warm, and the stifling air stings your lungs as you breathe.

A number of large rock islands can be seen in the near distance, each surrounded by flowing rivers of molten stone. Fumes rise off the glowing magma in lazy swirls, curling off into the darkness. A rough stone footbridge connects the island of rock that the tower rests upon to its neighbor to the east; a footpath runs off in the same direction, curving behind the bulbous rock formations to disappear in the distance.

Creatures: Within the magma flows of the cavern live a number of magma mephits that have come from the Elemental Plane of Fire through the lava plume in the temple. The mephits have allied themselves with Kasmine and the xills.

Magma Mephits (5): hp 19, 17, 16, 13, 10; *Monster Manual* 132.

Tactics: The mephits wait within the magma flows until the party disembarks the tower and attempts to cross the third stone bridge toward the cleric's temple (area 8). When the party is halfway across the bridge, three mephits attack from the magma using their breath weapons, which are useable every 1d4 rounds. Between blasts from their breath weapons, two mephits use their *pyrotechnics* spell-like ability—one attempts to blind the party, while another creates a cloud of choking smoke with the ability.

Characters who are blind or engulfed in the darkness of the *pyrotechnics* smoke must make an Intuit Direction check (DC 10) to avoid stumbling near the edge of the bridge if they attempt to move. Characters who fail this check must then make a successful Reflex save or Balance check (DC 14) or fall into the lava below. The mephits are reluctant to exit the safety of the magma (it provides half cover) and continue to harass the PCs in this manner by breathing and then pursuing the characters as they move along the bridge from the magma. This creates a challenging encounter as the PCs attempt to engage or escape the mephits.

Falling in magma is potentially lethal, as described in the "Magma" section above.

Development: If the mephits are not dealt with, or if they are reduced to half their number or less, they run off and join Caldre, the cleric in the fire temple. In such an instance, add the mephits to the encounter in area 8. If the PCs make a great deal of noise in their encounters with the mephits (like falling in the lava or casting any noisy spells), Caldre might hear the commotion (Listen, DC 15, each round of combat) and arrives from the temple in 5 rounds with his elemental servant in tow. Before heading to the scene of the battle, he casts *resistance, endure elements* (*fire*), *protection from good*, and *bull's strength* upon himself. Once engaged, he hangs back, casting *hold person* twice on any likely looking fighters in the party, then ordering his elemental servant to bull rush held foes into the magma before attacking them using its burn special ability. If cornered, he casts *darkness* and attempts to flee to Kasmine. Caldre's statistics are detailed in area 8.

Ad-hoc XP Award: PCs who successfully defeat the magma mephits here should earn 125% the normal experience due to the difficulty of battling the mephits in such precarious terrain.

8. TEMPLE OF THE XILLS (EL 11)

Acrid smoke billows along the floor of this rough carved room. Black basalt, porous and jagged, dominates this area. The curving sloped walls ascend a full 50 feet up to meet in a great arched dome overhead. Various ledges and rock crevices abound in the area, and the skittering sounds of unseen denizens waft toward you, distorted by the ever-present mists. A massive altar of once-molten glass dominates a nook carved from the east wall of the room. The altar is a smoky, translucent pink color, with depressions carved from its surface and a collection of humanoid skulls placed about its foot.

A number of finely woven banners depict fiery beings being worshiped by a score of small, insect-like creatures with six limbs. The north end of the room holds a molten column of viscous lava that flows from the floor into the ceiling in rhythmic waves. Giving off a blistering heat and casting a red glow into the room, the column thrums with magical energy, glowing and pulsing in the waves of scorching

NEW MAGIC ITEM

Whip of Taming: The whip of taming is the answer to every depraved devil's dark prayers. Woven from the flayed hides of hedonistic mortals, this dull black *+2 unholy whip* features barbed hooks at the ends of its three long tails. Up to three times per day, upon a successful melee attack the wielder can choose to have the whip afflict a victim with the effects of an *emotion* spell. The effect of the spell is always "despair" as described on page 199 of the *Player's Handbook*. A successful Will saving throw (DC 16) negates the *emotion* effect, but not the damage. The whip is a tool of evil, and any good creature attempting to wield it suffers the normal penalties associated with using an unholy weapon.

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *emotion, unholy blight; Market Price:* 65,901 gp; *Cost to Create:* 32,800 gp + 2,624 XP.

heat. A red-skinned reptilian figure about 5 feet high and clothed in robes of black leather stands at the altar, chanting in a strange tongue.

The temple is the residence of the cleric leader of the xills, Caldre, and his fire elemental servant.

Caldre, Male Xill Clr4: CR 9; Medium-size Outsider (evil, lawful); HD 5d8+10 plus 4d8+4; hp 67; Init +7; Spd 40 ft., AC 25, flat-footed 22, touch 13; Atk +13/+8 melee (1d6+4, +2 light mace), +12 melee (1d6+2, +1 light mace), +5 melee (1d4+2, claw), +5 melee (1d4+1, claw); or +12 ranged (1d8/crit ×3, 2 masterwork longbows); SA improved grab, paralysis, implant; SQ planewalk; SR 21; AL LE; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +11; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 11.

Skill: Concentration +9, Escape Artist +11, Intuit Direction +6, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Spellcraft +6, Spot +9, Tumble +11. *Feats:* Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Multidexterity, Multiweapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (mace).

Spells Prepared (5/5/4; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds* ×2, *detect magic* ×2, *resistance;* 1st—*cure light wounds* ×2, *endure elements* ×2, *protection from good*;* 2nd—*bull's strength*, darkness, hold person* ×2.

*Domain Spells. *Domains:* Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level); Strength (feat of strength 1/day—+4 Strength for 1 round).

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, +2 light mace, +1 light mace, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of cure critical wounds, potion of protection from elements (*fire*), bag of diamonds (300 gp, 200 gp ×2, 150 gp ×4, 75 gp ×5).

Large Fire Elemental: hp 60; *Monster Manual* 83.

Tactics: The elemental presently resides in the lava column heating the room, but it immediately attacks to defend the xill cleric if the pair was not alerted to the PCs' movements or battles with the magma mephitis. The lava column gives off a tremendous amount of heat, and characters who come within 10 feet of it take 1d6 points of subdual damage. The pillar also radiates enough heat that it acts as a *heat metal* spell (caster level 3rd) against characters who get that close.

Caldre casts *resist elements* (*fire*) and *protection from good* on himself if he can. He then moves back to the pillar and casts *bull's strength* on the elemental before turning to taunt the party into rushing in to attack them, refusing to parley at all. He then casts *hold person* twice if he has time. Caldre loves fighting with his magic maces and claws, and once the characters engage him or he runs out of holdperson spells, he Tumbles by the hardiest fighters in an attempt to reach a spellcaster or ranged attacker. He then uses his Strength domain ability to increase his Strength by 4 (+2 to attack and damage) for 1 round and attempts to drop a PC with one mighty blow. If he can, Caldre grapples physically weaker foes and tries to bite them. He focuses his attacks on one opponent at a time, trusting in the elemental to distract tougher fighter types.

If reduced to fewer than 20 hit points, Caldre casts *darkness* and attempts to flee to Kasmine to warn her of the intruders.

The Temple of the Xill's dominant feature is the lava column in the alcove. A successful Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 15) reveals that the plume is a gate to the Elemental Plane of Fire. The key to the gate is not present in the hideout (nor is it part of the adventure at all) and Cadre was busy attempting to divine what would open the gate so that he could travel through it. The other interesting feature in the room is the glass altar, which is formed from a solid piece of glass and fused to the ground. Other than Caldre's belongings, there's nothing else of interest in the room.

9. THE CLERIC'S ROOM

This room is very sparse. The rock walls have been hewn smooth and bear absolutely no ornamentation whatsoever. The stone floor is also smooth, with a few spidery cracks crisscrossing its slightly sloping surface. It contains a small bed formed from molten glass that rises about 3 feet from the floor. The bed is covered with a number of strange skins and hides, partially cured at best, which exude an unpleasant smell.

This is Caldre's room. He carries his valuables on him, so there's nothing of interest in this chamber.

10. RECEPTION HALL (EL 9)

Getting into this chamber has its own small challenges. The door to this room is made of solid stone, although it is unlocked, and the inhabitants within aren't making much noise. It's unlikely the PCs can prepare for this encounter before entering with mere Listen checks. Magical means might help them figure out what lies beyond the portal.

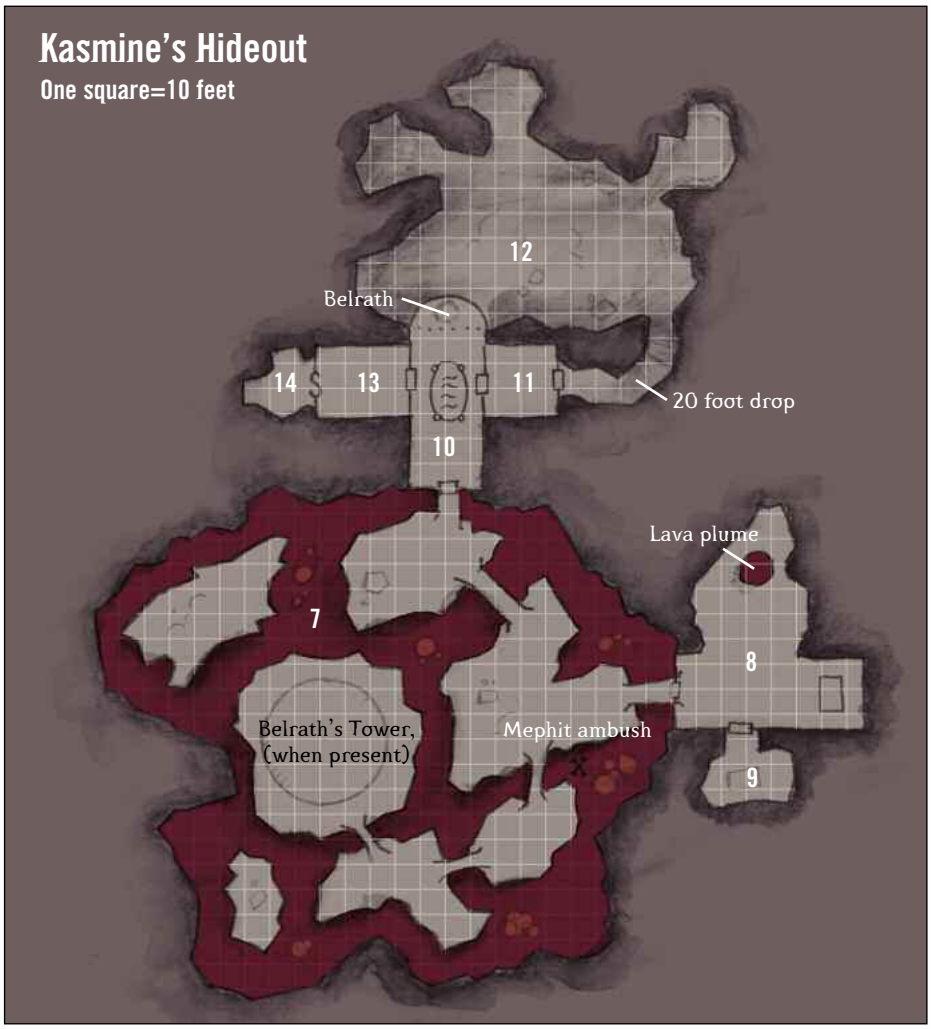
Stone Door: 6 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 90; Break DC 26.

Trap: Anyone who steps in the 5-foot square before the door who doesn't speak the command phrase, "Kasmine is a devilish beauty" triggers the trap.

Alarm Trap: CR 2; triggers mental alarm; Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.

Once the PCs open the door, whether they tripped, disarmed, or ignored the trap outside, read or paraphrase the following:

This room is gaudily decorated. Flowing red and purple draperies and huge murals adorn the walls. The murals show sequences that depict the temptation and



fall of man to a variety of vices. Cylindrical marble columns surround a steaming tub filled with warm bubbling water. Many piles of plush pillows and thick towels surround the tub. Closed doors lead both east and west.

In the north end of the hall you see a balcony overlooking a large chamber beyond this one. Suspended by a series of arched poles above the balcony is an imposing, man-shaped cage of wrought iron. Encased within the cage, bound, gagged, and positioned such that he can't help but gaze into the chamber to the north, is a human male. As you watch, he seems to struggle weakly against his bonds, but is unable to get free. The man is emaciated, and you see painful welts on his back.

Before you can truly take in this scene, you notice the two human-sized insect creatures covered in heavy, smoky chitin standing to the side of the balcony. Each of their four arms is tipped in razor sharp claws, although the creatures also carry tridents.

This is the lair of Kasmine the erinyes. Having failed to tempt Belrath into becoming evil, she is attempting to drive him insane by forcing the wizard to watch the captured townsfolk in the cavern below being implanted with the eggs of the xills. When the xills are birthed, and the townsfolk brutally killed, Kasmine is sure the sight of it will drive Belrath over the edge. Either way she is enjoying her game.

Kasmine checks in on Belrath periodically, but she spends most of her time in her personal quarters (area **13**) plotting her next move. She's appointed a pair of guardians to watch Belrath while she schemes.

Creatures: The two insect creatures are mezzoloths, native denizens of Gehenna and one of the subspecies of the dreaded yugoloths. They were placed here to deal with any rescue attempts or other unwelcome intruders, and they're eager to fight.

In addition to the mezzoloths, one of Kasmine's pet imps is perched atop the cage, invisible. It spends most of its time whispering to Belrath, reminding him of his failure and describing in excruciating detail the pain the townsfolk will experience when the xills' eggs hatch.

Mezzoloths (2): CR 7; Medium-size Outsiders (evil); HD 8d8+8; hp 44; Init +4; Spd 40 ft.; AC 18, flat-footed 18, touch 10; Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+3, trident) or +11 melee (1d4+3, 2 claws), or +12 ranged (1d8+3, trident); SA spell-like abilities, summon yugoloth; SQ damage reduction 10/+1, yugoloth qualities; SR 22; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Hide +9, Intimidate +10, Listen +11, Move Silently +9, Spot +11. *Feats:* Improved Critical (trident), Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (trident).

Spell-like Abilities: At will—*cause fear, darkness, desecrate, produce flame, see invisibility*; 2/day—*cloudkill, dispel*

magic. (Caster level 8th; save DC = 12 + spell level).

Twice per day, a mezzoloth can use *teleport without error* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only) as the spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer.

Summon Yugoloth (Ex): Once per day, a mezzoloth can attempt to summon another mezzoloth with a 40% chance of success.

Yugoloth Qualities: Yugoloths are immune to poison and acid, and they have cold, fire, and electricity resistance 20. These are extraordinary abilities.

Yugoloths can also communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language. This is a supernatural ability.

See the *Manual of the Planes*, page 185–188 if you're interested in more information on mezzoloths and the other subspecies of yugoloths.

Possessions: The mezzoloths carry their wickedly barbed tridents, but nothing else.

Tactics: One mezzoloth begins the fight with its *cloudkill* spell-like ability. The other targets a tough looking fighter with *dispel magic*. Once melee is engaged, the mezzoloths fight with their tridents or claws until slain. The yugoloth master who "loaned" them to Kasmine—a fierce ultraloth named Por Ell—told them to follow her orders to the letter, and Kasmine's last orders were to battle intruders to the death.

The imp sitting on Belrath's cage watches the battle for 1 round before acting. It then flies invisibly to the rearmost PC and attempts to sting him with its barbed tail. The following round, if it is still alive, it turns invisible and rushes to area **13** to inform Kasmine of the PCs' presence.

Development: During the combat, the wizard Belrath listens intently. Unable to call out due to his gag, unable to even watch his fate decided, he waits tensely until the battle is over. If the PCs release him from the cage, he is desperately grateful. He now realizes his folly and is extremely determined to make up for his mistakes.

Belrath is secured in the locked cage by three sets of manacles: one binding his ankles and one chaining each of his hands to the cage. To free Belrath during combat each of the four locks (one on each set of manacles and one on the cage itself) needs to be opened individually.

Masterwork Manacles (3): hardness 10; hp 10; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 30.

Iron Cage: hardness 10; hp 45; Break DC 26; Open Lock DC 30.

Using the key that Kasmine has around her neck enables a character to free Belrath in 2 rounds. One charge from a *knock* spell opens all four locks simultaneously. If freed during combat, Belrath immediately attacks his captors and aids the party to the best of his ability from that point on.

If the characters rescue the wizard, he is grateful, but he demands that the characters help him rescue the peasants in area **13**. If the characters refuse, Belrath, in a fit of guilt, rushes into area **12** in a mad solo rescue attempt. If the PCs don't follow soon after, the wizard is quickly slain by the xills.

Belrath doesn't volunteer any information regarding his corruption and failure to realize Kasmine's true nature. He says only that he "fell victim to the fell wiles of a dreadful devil" and that "he has vowed to make it up to the citizens of Halea's Reach, who he has so sorely disappointed." If the party informs the Jackal that Calahir Olwain and Albie Chibald were slain, Belrath is horrified and withdraws into a quiet, dark depression—a mood that doesn't lift until he is back on the Prime Material Plane, kidnapped citizens of Halea's Reach in tow.

Belrath, Male Human Wiz8: CR 8; Medium-size Humanoid; hp 40 (currently 21); Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, flat-footed 10, touch 12; Atk +5 melee (1d3–1, unarmed strike) or +8 ranged (ranged touch); SQ spells; AL CG; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 11, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +9, Spellcraft +7, Knowledge (the planes) +7. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll.

Possessions: Belrath's four spellbooks sit in a sack on the floor in the corner of the room, out of sight of his cage. Other than that, Belrath's only possessions consist of the rough rags he currently wears; the rest of his gear was taken by Kasmine and bartered away to her allies.

Spells Prepared (4/5/4/4/3; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—***ray of frost***, *resistance, light, detect magic;* 1st—*mage armor, identify, sleep,* ***magic missile*** ×2 (one used); 2nd—*web,* ***blur****, invisibility, mirror image;* 3rd—*dispel magic,* ***lightning bolt****, haste, slow;* 4th—***confusion****, summon monster IV, fire shield.*

The bolded spells were cast by Belrath during the combat in which he was captured by Kasmine.

Spellbook: Belrath's spellbook contains all the spells above, as well as the following spells. 0—all; 1st—*endure elements, feather fall, grease, sleep, unseen servant;* 2nd—*cat's grace, continual flame, detect thoughts, endurance, flaming sphere, misdirection, protection from arrows;* 3rd—*fireball, greater magic weapon, protection from elements, suggestion;* 4th—*dimension door, solid fog.*

11. EMPTY HALLWAY

This room is empty except for four small columns that stretch to the stone ceiling and a door in the east wall.

The room is empty.

12. XILL CAVERN (EL VARIABLE)

This cavern can be seen by walking down the tunnel from area **12** or by looking over the balcony in area **11**.

The roughhewn rock cavern contains a scene best left to nightmares. Tied spread-eagle to stakes on the floor are dozens of peasants. Wild eyed with terror and in obvious discomfort, their bodies are covered with purplish and yellowing bruises and their abdomens greatly distended. Looking more closely, you notice that something within their swollen bellies occasionally writhes or throbs.

Barrels of water and sacks of food are piled in a nook in the north of the room. Three small chambers lead from this cavern, but you cannot make out what might be hidden within their shadowy depths from where you stand.

All these people once lived in Halea's Reach. The young boy kidnapped in the opening scene is present here unless the PCs foiled the initial abduction attempt.

Creatures: The room is guarded by six xills unless they responded to Kasmine's scream for help (see area **13**). Twenty peasants are held here. Also note that if either or both of the two xills in the initial encounter were slain, the number of xills in this room should be reduced accordingly. When they traveled to the Prime Material Plane, these two xills left their most valuable possessions behind (see **Treasure** below).

The three small rooms branching from the main cavern act as the sleeping chambers of the xills. Each holds several small beds and an assortment of common living items, but the xills carry their more valuable treasure.

Xills (6): hp 26, 28, 31, 34, 35, 39; *Monster Manual* 187.

Possessions: Each xill carries a small magic item you should consider while running this encounter. The first has a *potion of cure moderate wounds,* the second a *potion of endurance,* the third a *potion of blur,* the fourth a *+1 longsword,* the fifth a *+1 heavy mace,* and the sixth a *+1 medium shield.* Each xill also wears an iron key on a thong about its neck.

Tactics: If they do not hear Kasmine's scream, the xills are tending to the prisoners and preparing for the birth of their spawn. They defend their implanted hosts to the death.

Development: The prisoners have been implanted with xill eggs. The peasants are extremely grateful to be rescued, and they want to be brought home immediately.

A successful Heal check (DC 20) reveals the following information concerning the condition of the captives:

- The eggs can be removed with a successful Heal check (DC 20) or by casting *remove disease.*
- The first clutch of young xills (four total) will be born within 8 hours. The next group of four xills emerges 24 hours later, and the cycle continues in this manner until all the peasants are dead (and all the xill are born) or they are healed. If the party cannot heal the afflicted townsfolk they can be transported to Halea's Reach, or a runner can be sent to retrieve Cedras Arpad, the Cleric of Pelor who will have the requisite *remove disease* scrolls and spells prepared.

Treasure: A successful Search check (DC 15) in the three small rooms off the main chamber reveals a small coffer near each bed (there are a total of six), each of which can be unlocked by the keys worn around the necks of the xills. Each coffer contains 500 gp. This would be a prime location to drop a hook for a future adventure, in the form of a note, journal, or campaign relevant item.

13. KASMINE'S BEDROOM (EL 13)

Rich draperies hang on the walls of this plush room, while thick carpet covers the floors and a large pile of pillows and blankets are mounded in the northeast corner of the room. Racks of women's clothing and shoes take up the entire length of the south wall. Many chests of wood bound in steel are scattered about, some half open and spilling their contents onto the floor. A large mirrored dressing table covered in cosmetics and jewelry is pressed up against the middle of the north wall, and two chaise lounges upholstered with brocaded silk in tones of gold and blue are set near the dressing table, their carved wooden legs ending in gleaming gilded claws. A huge round bed occupies the middle of the chamber, covered in a rich purple velvet spread and surrounded by diaphanous hangings of sheer fabric that flutter and ripple in soft air currents. A number of oil paintings grace the walls, depicting the hellish torment of a variety of men by black-robed, voluptuous women with feathered, bat-like wings.

This is Kasmine's personal chamber. If the PCs have made their presence known to her, she appears to them in the guise of the beautiful, helpless captive of the xills in order to buy time to use her gaze attack.

A secret door in the west wall can be found on a successful Search check (DC 20).

Kasmine, Erinyes Sor5: CR 12; Medium-size Outsider (evil, lawful); (5 ft., 6 in. tall); HD 6d8+6 plus 5d4+5; hp 60; Init +5; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average); AC 20, flat-footed 19, touch 11; Atk +12/+7 melee (1d2+2 subdual, *whip of taming*), or +10/+5 melee (1d8+3/crit 19–20, longsword), or +9/+4 ranged (1d8/crit ×3, longbow), or +9 ranged (rope entangle), or +9 ranged touch; SA rope entangle, charm person, spell-like abilities, summon baatezu; SQ damage reduction 10/+1, baatezu qualities, tongues; SR 12; AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +11; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 20.

Skills: Bluff +14, Concentration +11, Disguise +11, Escape Artist +9, Hide +9, Knowledge (the planes) +11, Listen +11, Move Silently +9, Search +7, Spellcraft+12, Spot +11. *Feats:* Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip).

Languages: Common, Infernal, Elven.

Spells Known (6/8/5; base save DC = 15 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, ghost sound, light, mage hand, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*alarm, charm person, mage armor, magic missile*; 2nd—*flaming sphere, web.*

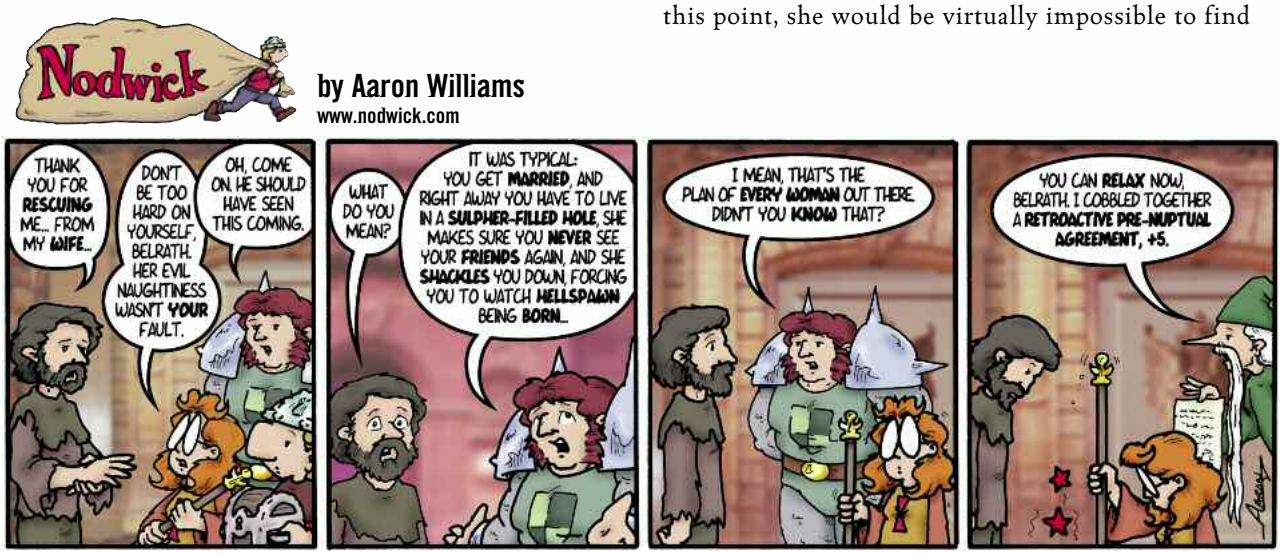
Possessions: ring of minor elemental resistance (*electricity*), *potion of cure moderate wounds* ×2, *whip of taming* (see the "New Magic Item" sidebar), key to Belrath's cage.

Imps (6): hp 16, 15, 13, 13, 12, 10; *Monster Manual* 48.

Tactics: If the characters trigger the alarm trap or an imp in area **12** warns her of the PCs' presence, Kasmine casts *mage armor* and uses her *polymorph self* ability to look like a beautiful, disheveled human woman. She then begins to make gentle crying noises (Listen DC 10) before the characters open the door. When the characters enter, Kasmine immediately adopts a damsel in distress act. She runs toward the characters, crying and pleading with them to save her husband from the terrible cage. She attempts to make eye contact with as many characters as possible, attempting to use her charm person gaze attack, all while asking the PCs to free him.

If this tactic does not work, Kasmine lets out a blood-curling scream that causes the imps hiding invisibly in the room to attack immediately, as well as drawing the xills from area **13** in 2 rounds.

Consult the *Monster Manual* carefully in preparation for this encounter, paying special attention to Kasmine's spell-like abilities, her charm person gaze attack, and her entangle ability. Kasmine is not a fighter; she prefers to let others do that for her and live to manipulate another day. The devil won't stick it out and fight to the death. If things go badly, she uses her *teleport without error* ability and escapes into the wilds of Gehenna. At this point, she would be virtually impossible to find


Nodwick
by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com
THANK YOU FOR RESCUING ME... FROM MY WIFE...
DON'T BE TOO HARD ON YOURSELF, BELRATH. HER EVIL NAUGHTINESS WASN'T YOUR FAULT.
OH, COME ON. HE SHOULD HAVE SEEN THIS COMING.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IT WAS TYPICAL: YOU GET MARRIED, AND RIGHT AWAY YOU HAVE TO LIVE IN A SULPHER-FILLED HOLE, SHE MAKES SURE YOU NEVER SEE YOUR FRIENDS AGAIN, AND SHE SHACKLES YOU DOWN, FORCING YOU TO WATCH HELLSPAWN BEING BORN...
I MEAN, THAT'S THE PLAN OF EVERY WOMAN OUT THERE. DIDN'T YOU KNOW THAT?
YOU CAN RELAX NOW, BELRATH. I COBBLED TOGETHER A RETROACTIVE PRE-NUPTUAL AGREEMENT, +5.

unless the PCs resort to powerful magic (such as *discern location* or something similar). If the PCs display the capability to discover her whereabouts, she continues to *teleport without error* until they cease pursuing her or she is slain.

Treasure: Besides Kasmine's personal treasure, she owns dozens of dresses and matching shoes (800 gp total) along with twelve pieces of assorted jewelry (100 gp each).

14. KASMINE'S TREASURE ROOM

Once the PCs find and open the secret door, read or paraphrase the following:

> The secret door parts silently from the walls of the cave and swings lightly outward without a sound. It opens into a rough-hewn chamber that contains a pair of large closed chests. The walls and floor are completely unadorned and swept bare of debris and dust. A low ceiling of chiseled stone looms barely 8 feet overhead. The chests placed in the center of the room are made of wood bound in iron and seem to be quite sturdy.

The room is otherwise empty.

Treasure: The chests are not trapped and contain the following items: 300 gp; 1,340 sp; a +2 *battle-axe;* arcane scrolls of *contagion, halt undead,* and *control water;* divine scrolls of *dispel evil, planar ally,* and *creeping doom;* and a *potion of reduce* (5th level).

CONCLUSION

If the PCs succeed in liberating Belrath, freeing the peasants, and returning them to Halea's Reach sans the xills' eggs, they are invited to a week long celebration in their honor. The celebration takes about a week to prepare. During that time, the characters are treated royally by the folk of Halea's Reach. Many of the people who fled town begin to return by the end of the celebration.

Belrath is extraordinarily grateful and offers to make each of the characters a potion of their choosing. If the characters looted the tower, the Jackal expects them to return his things, although he is perfectly happy to let them keep any of Kasmine's belongings. The wizard is visible helping with preparations for the celebration and remaking old acquaintances in town.

Belrath's tower continues to phase back and forth between the Prime Material Plane and Gehenna, and Belrath vows to find a way to stop the shifting. Belrath might even ask the characters to go on quests looking for information and magic items that might help fix the tower.

Kasmine's hideout remains accessible to the party for as long as it takes Belrath to stop the tower from phasing. The conduit to the Elemental Plane of Fire is still present, as are the rocky mountains and deadly slopes of Gehenna, should the PCs be interested in pursuing further adventures in these places.

If Kasmine escapes alive she definitely looks to have her revenge on the PCs. Kasmine is a master manipulator, and the characters have just scratched the surface of her possible resources. If Kasmine is forced to flee to her father, an even more powerful devil, and the characters find means to follow her there, things might get really interesting. Ω

Chad is a grade school teacher, unrepentant roleplaying addict, and part-time DM. He inhabits the frigid northern wastes with his family, dreaming up new challenges to keep his players on their toes.

Greg is a vice principal entrusted with disciplining 450 unruly goblins at a undisclosed kindergarten to grade eight school in the frozen Canadian north. Greg and his wife eagerly await the arrival of their own halfling rogue or pixie princess in October.

ISSUE #96 PREVIEWS

PANDEMONIUM IN THE VEINS

by Frank Brunner

Gladiators fight for glory on the sands of The Veins, the wildest arena in the land. But now a malevolent force is killing off the gladiators. The stables need new recruits, and the PCs are prime candidates. Can they survive professional combat long enough to expose the menace to the Veins? "Pandemonium in the Veins" is a D&D adventure for four 5th-level characters but is adaptable for levels 1–9. This adventure is in support of "Campaign Components: Gladiators" from DRAGON *Magazine* issue #303.

DWARVES AT DINNER

by Rob Manning

When adventurers visit the Underdark, they expect foul events to befall them. When Underdark denizens visit the surface, they should expect the same . . . shouldn't they? When a deep dweller of royal lineage is trapped by a foul beast on the surface, his entourage must coerce some unsuspecting dupes into rescuing their leader. Enter the PCs. "Dwarves at Dinner" is a D&D adventure for four 6th-level PCs but is adaptable for characters of levels 2–8.

THE WITCH OF SERPENT'S BRIDGE

BY RUSSELL BROWN

ARTWORK BY VINOD RAMS · CARTOGRAPHY BY PETER WHITLEY

Magic Items · Monsters · NPCs · Objects · Settlements · Traps

"The Witch of Serpent Bridge" is a D&D adventure designed for four 3rd-level player characters (PCs). A ranger would be helpful, as would characters with good Diplomacy skill. Characters who survive the entire adventure should advance to 4th level. You can modify the adventure for other levels by adjusting the encounters as described in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. The adventure begins when PCs take the most direct route through the Stagnant Wood.

BACKGROUND

For hundreds of years, the Stagnant Wood has been a hunting ground for small bands of gnolls. The wood is crisscrossed with their trails and spoiled by refuse from their temporary camps. It is also home to a solitary half-elf witch named Voreo, whom the gnolls fear and avoid.

Human civilization came to the region over a century ago, and the Woods Road cut through the heavily forested area. People from the surrounding towns used the road for years, but stories of frightening creatures and missing travelers eventually convinced most sensible folk to avoid it. Instead, they skirted the wood to the east and wore a path they called the Wise Man's Way, now the Wisem Road.

Six summers ago, a barbarian leader from the north conquered the towns in the area and claimed the wood as part of his lands. He forbade the worship of Kord, the local god of choice, demanding tribute and sacrifice to the evil barbarian god Erythnul. Many people were driven from their homes and villages to fend for themselves in the wild. A small group of these refugees, mostly from the conquered town of Pedwich, faced the dangers of the Stagnant Wood and secretly settled the hamlet of New Pedwich miles up the old Woods Road.

Although the early years were tough, New Pedwich has flourished. Its people have cleared the surrounding lands for farming and pasture. A few brave townspeople have ventured into the dense woods to harvest pelts, meat, mushrooms, berries, and rare plants.

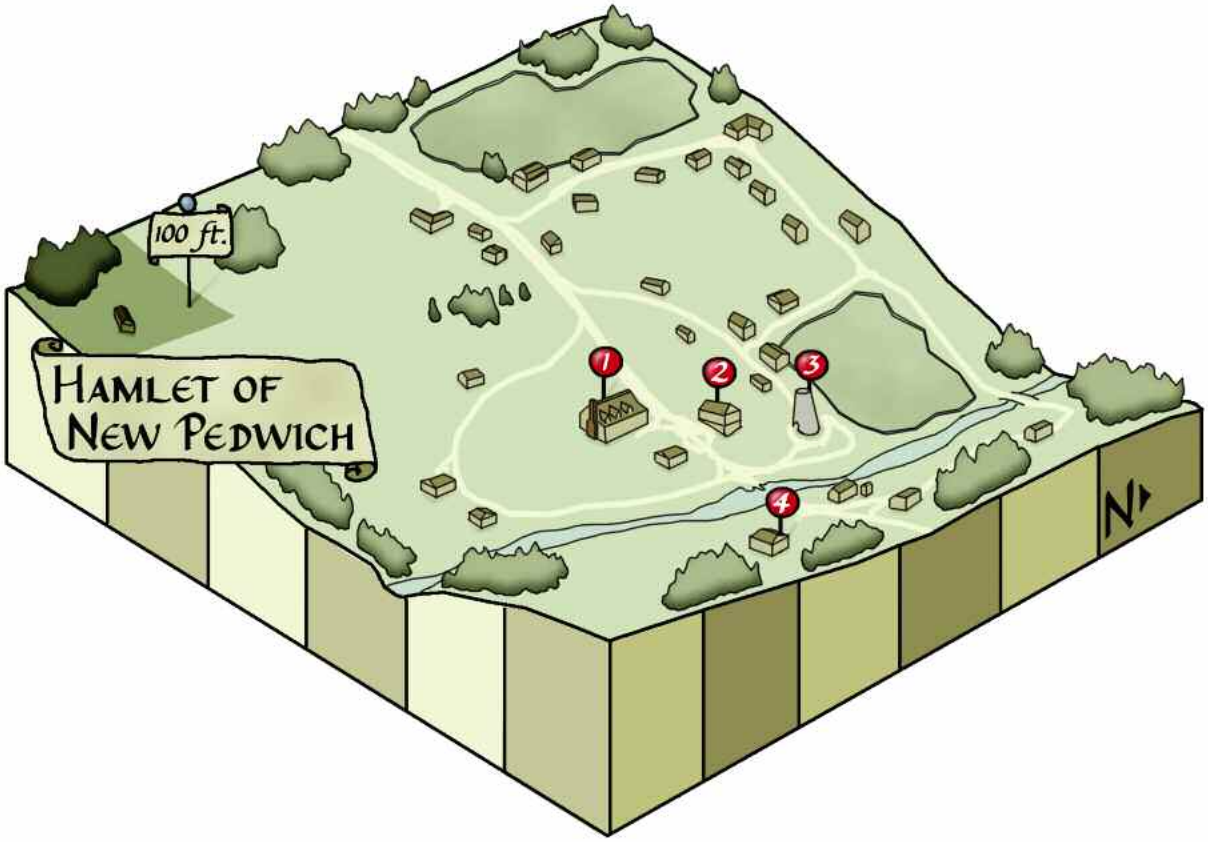
Even in its prosperity, though, the hamlet has not been free of the danger that surrounds it. Livestock disappears, and the occasional lone traveler is lost. The yipping, howling, and growling from the woods sometimes robs the entire town of sleep.

Jelup, the town's young priest, recently proclaimed that Kord had come to him in a vision. The god declared that if the town built a fine new temple of stone, Kord would give them the strength to purge evil from the surrounding woods. The town decided to heed Jelup's vision and repay Kord's generosity by building a modest stone temple in his name. Master Mason Pug Highcourse found hard limestone in an ancient quarry nearby and sent south for skilled laborers.

It is now early fall, and the new temple has risen along with the daytime heat and the crops in the fields. The last full moon before the harvest moon has just passed. The people of New Pedwich are preparing to gather their grain and animal feed into barns and silos.

Up until now the gnolls in the area have left the town alone. It has been easier for them to kill and eat helpless livestock or a band of disorganized orcs. The prospect of risking their lives attacking a well-organized village just for food and a few slaves never appealed to them. But now, encouraged by an alliance with barbarian invaders and offended by the permanence of the new stone temple, the gnolls threaten the town with poison and a direct night attack.

A gnoll wizard named Yeecha, at the nearby shrine of the demon lord Yeenoghu, has been watching the town with apprehension and disgust, watching it grow and prosper, watching the temple rise. He has been collecting poisonous berries and plans to poison the town's stores of grain as soon as the harvest is over.



The more immediate and less subtle threat is the local gnoll leader, Onugharra. He has recently been converted to the worship of Erythnul by Atwan, a missionary sent into the Stagnant Wood by the barbarian conqueror. Atwan has convinced Onugharra to attack the town, kill the Kord worshipers, and destroy the temple. The gnoll leader is gathering his forces in a small clearing a few miles to the north of New Pedwich.

While Onugharra's band gathers, he has sent small parties of gnolls and goblins to scout out the town. Since the new temple itself will make a reasonably defensible fortress when complete, Onugharra has ordered his goblins, especially the rogue Schleggit, to sabotage its construction. They are responsible for the death of one laborer and injuries to others.

Master Mason Pug Highcourse spotted one of these goblins sneaking around town one night and followed it into the woods to the east. He lost track of the creature but found a trail cut through the dense forest. Not knowing which way to go, Pug chose to follow the trail south and ended up at the dark cave entrance to the shrine of Yeenoghu. Pug entered the cave and encountered the gnoll wizard Yeecha.

Instead of attacking Pug, Yeecha *hypnotized* him. The wizard convinced Pug that the witch of Serpent Bridge had cursed New Pedwich and was responsible for the problems at the temple. Pug does not remember finding the shrine entrance or confronting Yeecha, but he is now fully convinced that the witch is the problem.

CHARACTER HOOKS

The PCs might run across the hamlet of New Pedwich if they decide to take the most direct road north through the Stagnant Wood. Fresh wagon and horse tracks from temple laborers heading toward New Pedwich might convince them that the road is safe.

One of the PCs could be related to Epps, the temple worker that died, and might have heard that it was not an accident. PCs might also be recruited directly by Pug in one of the southern towns, which he visits often looking for more laborers. See area **B2** for details.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

When the PCs arrive in the town of New Pedwich, their goal is to discover the cause of the accidents at the new temple of Kord. They can stay at Slatejaw's Boarding House with the workers constructing the temple.

Pug Highcourse immediately sends the PCs in the direction of the witch of Serpent Bridge—his hypnotic suggestion doesn't allow him to accept another possibility.

The witch tries to frighten the characters away with her spells but might eventually make contact with them. She tries to convince them she is not involved and directs them toward the gnoll trails east of New Pedwich.

Either through information from the witch, goblin tracks through the woods, or the strange stories of the old farmer Hentoe, the PCs find their way to the gnoll trail in the woods to the east of town. This leads them south to the underground shrine of the gnoll demon lord Yeenoghu and north to the encampment of the gnoll warlord Onugharra, who is gathering forces to attack the town.

To successfully complete this adventure, the PCs must discover that the witch, Voreo, has not cursed New Pedwich. Then they must face Yeecha in the shrine of Yeenoghu and successfully defend the town from Onugharra's attack. They should also stop Atwan from returning and reporting to his barbarian leaders.

Their chance of success increases if they can break Pug's hypnotic suggestion, gain the trust of the temple laborers, and destroy Onugharra's camp before the main gnoll attack.

A. THE QUARRY

The PCs notice a trail heading east from the road about a mile south of the hamlet of New Pedwich. It leads to an ancient limestone quarry that acts as the source of stone for the new temple. If the PCs approach during the day, they hear shouting and the repetitive ring of metal striking stone.

> A quarry has been dug into the ground here. It is roughly 30 feet deep and 80 feet across, with steep walls on three sides and a ramp down along the west face. The air at the quarry is heavy with dust, making it difficult to breathe.

Eight temple workers (see encounter **B1**) are here during the day, covered with dust and coughing while they work. They are either cutting stone blocks from the quarry wall or loading them onto sleds for the trip back to town. See the "Gaining the Workers' Respect" sidebar to determine their reaction to the PCs.

B. THE HAMLET OF NEW PEDWICH

> About four miles into the Stagnant Wood, a wide dirt path branches to the east. All of the hoofprints and parallel tracks in the road appear to take this path—none continue north.

If the PCs take this path, they walk another half mile before reaching the cleared area around the hamlet. Read the following if the PCs approach by day:

> The path opens into a large glade about 200 yards across. In the center is a small cluster of buildings. Sounds of pounding, sawing, and cursing carry across the farmed fields surrounding the hamlet.

New Pedwich is in the middle of a great project. In response to a vision of the town's priest, and in gratitude to Kord for recent prosperity, the funds of the town have been entrusted to Master Mason Pug Highcourse. He is using them to build a small but impressive stone temple in the center of town.

If the PCs arrive at night, the town looks mostly the same, except no one is working on the temple.

B1. SLATEJAW'S BOARDING HOUSE

The boarding house is owned and run by a large, muscular man named Arric Slatejaw (male human Exp2; hp 9; Str 16; Intimidate +5, Diplomacy +5, Craft—carpentry +5). Slatejaw gets along well with everyone in town and serves his customers at his own pace.

Slatejaw's is a simple, single-story, wooden building consisting of a large sleeping area for the workers and a common room where they eat and drink in the evenings. The sleeping room is filled with twelve double bunkbeds and the smell of sweat and limestone dust. The common room contains six tables with benches and a short bar where Slatejaw works. A door in the back of the common area leads to Slatejaw's own room and storage area.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure is designed for a party of four 3rd-level PCs. Besides adding or subtracting levels from those characters and NPCs that have them to alter the challenge of the adventure, it is possible to adjust the major encounters for lower- and higher-level parties by following these guidelines:

1st- to 2nd-level PCs: Assume Onugharra plans to attack the town the fourth night after the PCs arrive to give them more recuperation time. Reduce the frequency of random encounters and eliminate Schleggit and the ankheg encounter. Cut the number of gnolls, orcs, and goblins in all other encounters in half.

4th- to 5th-level PCs: The adventure should be fine as it is, but it could be made more challenging by adding 3 more bandits, 3 more gnolls to area **F3**, 1 more grick in area **H11**, replacing the wight in area **F14** with a wraith, and adding an ogre to Onugharra's army.

6th- to 7th-level PCs: Consider doubling the number of creatures in each encounter and replacing the wight in area **F14** with two wraiths or three dread warriors (see *Monsters of Faerûn* page 46). It might also help to make Voreo 10th level, with additional spells (*dominate person* and *summon monster V*) and the Spell Focus (Enchantment) feat to increase her chances of dealing with higher-level PCs.

Creatures (EL —): Twenty temple workers stay at Slatejaw's. When they first meet the PCs, they behave in a suspicious and unfriendly manner (see the "Gaining the Worker's Respect" sidebar).

In the evening, twelve temple workers sit in the common area and six in the bunk room. Between midnight and dawn they are all in the bunk room except for two who stand on watch at the temple. During the day, they are all out working on the temple or cutting stone at the quarry—all except Korrin, who fractured his left arm just two days ago when the scaffolding he was standing on collapsed. Korrin wanders between the new temple and Slatejaw's, and has time to talk to the PCs.

During the PCs' first night at Slatejaw's, the temple workers try to embarrass them in contests of strength: wrestling (successful pin to win, see *Player's Handbook*, page 137), arm wrestling (opposed Strength check), and fist fighting (one-on-one unarmed, unarmored combat to unconsciousness

Korrin, Male Human Exp1: See temple worker statistics. Korrin cannot use his left arm, so his club damage is 1d6+2.

Temple Workers, Male Human Exp1 (19): CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d6+4 (includes Toughness

ENCOUNTERS ON THE ROAD

For every hour the PCs spend on the road through the Stagnant Wood, roll 1d10 and consult the following table to see if there is an encounter. Add 2 to the roll if the PCs travel at night, and treat duplicate rolls as no encounter.

Roll	Encounter
1–2	Temple Workers (EL —)
3–5	No Encounter
6	Boar (EL 2)
7	Ankheg (EL 3)
8	Wolverine (EL 2)
9–12	Bandit Ambush (EL 5)

ENCOUNTERS IN THE WOODS

For every hour the PCs spend in the woods (including the gnoll trails), roll 1d10 and consult the following table to see if they have an encounter.

Roll	Encounter
1–4	No Encounter
5	Goblins Gathering Hexberries (EL 1)
6	Hexberries (EL 1)
7	Gnoll Slavers (EL 2)
8	Fire Beetle Nest (EL 2)
9	Ankheg (EL 3)
10	Boar (EL 2)

Ankheg (EL 3): This creature has been blamed for the death of the town's old carpenter. They townspeople call it "the Gnasher." It attacks from a burrow beside the road.

Ankheg (1): hp 30; *Monster Manual* 18.

Bandit Ambush (EL 5): Five bandits hide alongside of the road, waiting to ambush travelers. One of them jumps into the middle of the road and confronts the PCs, demanding their gold and jewelry. The others stay in cover and keep arrows ready.

Bandits, Human War1 (5): CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 8 each; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1/crit 19–20, short sword) or +2 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, shortbow); AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will –1; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 9; Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +1, Intimidate +4, Climb +3, Hide +3. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (short sword).

Possessions: studded leather armor, short sword, dagger, shortbow with 20 arrows, and 100 sp.

Treasure: The bandits carry their treasure with them in a cloth sack. The sack contains 60 gp, a gold necklace with a small emerald (280 gp), a silver-embroidered shawl (30 gp), and a bronze symbol of Erythnul (10 gp).

Boar (EL 2): A wild boar charges from the underbrush.

Boar (1): hp 20; *Monster Manual* 194.

Giant Fire Beetle Nest (EL 2): The PCs stumble across a gnoll garbage heap that has been claimed by giant fire beetles as a nest.

Giant Fire Beetles (5): hp 2, 3, 3, 4, 7; *Monster Manual* 206.

Treasure: A successful Search (DC 15) of the nest reveals a *potion of enlarge* (5th level).

Gnoll Slavers (EL 2): The PCs are attacked by two gnolls leading two badly beaten orcs toward Onugharra's encampment. If the gnolls are engaged in combat, the orcs flee.

Gnoll (2): hp 11, 12; *Monster Manual* 105.

Possessions: 80 gp, 32 pp.

Orcs (2): hp 1, 2; *Monster Manual* 146.

Goblins Gathering Hexberries (EL 1): The PCs encounter a group of goblins carrying small leather sacks of freshly-picked hexberries (see sidebar).

Goblins (4): hp 4 each; *Monster Manual* 107.

Possessions: 2 doses of hexberries each.

Hexberries (EL 1): The PCs pass a clump of ripe hexberry bushes (see the sidebar). If anyone in the party has failed a Wilderness Lore check to forage for food today, they gather these berries accidentally. Anyone who eats the berries ingests the poison.

Temple Workers (EL —): The PCs encounter three workers from the temple (see area **B1**) heading in the opposite direction. If the PCs are on the road south of the quarry, these workers are either on their way to southern towns to spend their pay and drink, or they are coming back from such a trip. If the PCs are on the road between the quarry and New Pedwich, the workers are driving two horses pulling a sled used to haul stone from the quarry. The sled is empty if the workers are heading south or piled with limestone blocks if heading north. If the PCs are north of New Pedwich, treat this as No Encounter.

Wolverine (EL 2): The characters stumble across a prowling wolverine.

Wolverine (1): hp 28; *Monster Manual* 204.

feat); hp 10; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk +2 melee (1d3+2, unarmed subdual), or +2 melee (1d6+3, club); AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 9.

Skills: Balance +4, Climb +6, Craft (carpentry) +4, Craft (stonemasonry) +4, Handle Animal +3, Knowledge (local area) +4, Use Rope +4. *Feats:* Toughness, Lightning Reflexes.

Possessions: Each has a club and 20 sp.

Old Hentoe Blackwool is another Slatejaw's regular. He is an eccentric halfling who appears to be at least 115 years old. The temple workers occasionally harass old Hentoe for his wild stories, but he keeps telling them, and they keep listening.

Hentoe tells the PCs the story of the savage barbarian attacks on Pedwich and terrible sacrifices offered there to Erythnul. "That's why we all ended up in this Kord-forsaken woods."

If the PCs seem interested in Hentoe's stories, he tells them that he believes strange wolf-people rule the Stagnant Wood. He has never seen one, but he has heard them yipping and barking at night.

Hentoe quickly switches to talking about the little "impish creatures" he's seen sneaking around town. If the PCs seem to believe him, Hentoe tells them he saw "Master Highcourse" follow one of the creatures into the woods one night. Old Hentoe leads them to the riverbank near the old temple of Kord, where he tells them he saw Master Highcourse follow the creature across the river, then east into the forest.

Development: PCs with the Track feat can find tracks and follow them with a Wilderness Lore check (DC 16) to the opposite bank of the river, then east for two miles through the woods to the Gnoll Trail (see area **E**). Another successful Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 10) reveals that these are goblin prints. If the PCs successfully follow the tracks, they see boot prints (Pug's) alongside. When they reach the gnoll trail, they see goblin tracks in both directions, but Pug's tracks lead south.

If the PCs need help tracking, Hentoe lowers his voice and suggests they visit Doeshine Trapper, the reclusive daughter of a recently deceased hunter. She lives in a small cabin across the bridge, near the edge of the forest (see area **B4**).

If Pug Highcourse finds out the PCs are heading east, he demands that they stop wasting time and go after the witch instead.

Old Hentoe, Male Halfling Com8: CR 7; Small Humanoid; HD 8d4–16; hp 14 (includes Toughness feat); Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Atk +5 melee (1d4–1/crit 19–20, masterwork dagger); AL CG; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 6, Int 13, Wis 9, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +4, Handle Animal +5, Hide +5, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Profession (squire) +6, Profession (house servant) +5, Spot +8, Perform +3. *Feats:* Dodge, Alertness, Toughness.

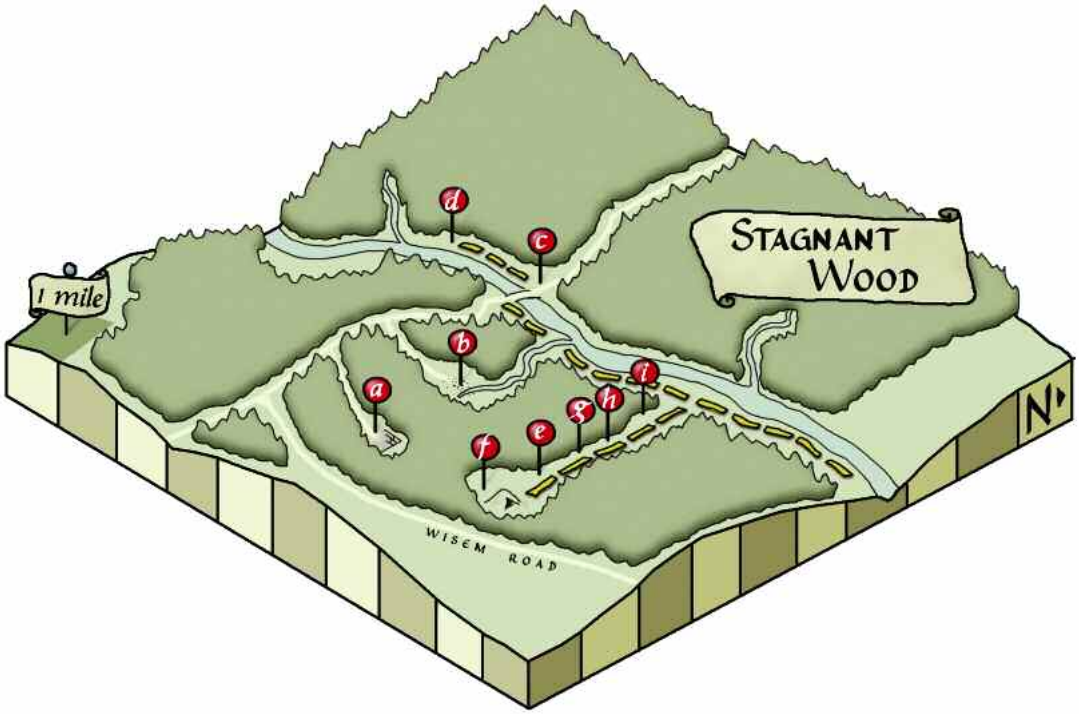
Possessions: masterwork dagger, 8 gp, 20 sp, quarterstaff.

B2. THE NEW TEMPLE OF KORD

Read the second paragraph only if the PCs approach during the day.

The limestone walls of the unfinished temple are 5–15 feet high, sitting on a stone-paved slab. Ladders and sturdy wooden scaffolding, lashed with rope and pegged together, surround the structure.

Muscular men mix mortar, cut stone blocks, and haul them to the top course with ropes and wooden



pulleys. The sounds of stones being shaped, sawing wood, and the curses of the supervising dwarf drown out the other noises in the town.

During the day, eleven workers labor here (see area **B1**), along with Master Mason Pug Highcourse. At night, two workers are assigned to watch for trouble, but they usually drink too much and fall asleep at their posts shortly after midnight.

Creature (EL —): Pug Highcourse is in charge here. He is a gruff, precise dwarf with little tolerance for idle conversation. Since his encounter with Yeecha (see area **F4**), Pug can't get the witch off of his mind and is desperately looking for help. If the PCs ask about the problems at the temple and seem willing to help, or they indicate that they plan to continue north on the Woods Road, Pug drops whatever he's doing and takes them to a quiet table at Slatejaw's to tell them the following.

"The project has been plagued by problems lately. The scaffolding occasionally just falls down, injuring my workers. And we have had three fires, all starting for no reason in the middle of the night. No one was seriously injured until a week ago, when we found a worker named Epps dead beneath a stone block that must have fallen from the top of the temple wall. I've put two of my workers on watch every night, but they've seen nothing. It's very unnatural.

Now, everyone who lives near these woods knows about the scheming witch that lives to the west of Serpent Bridge. I'm convinced that she's the problem. Somehow she cursed this project.

Pug offers the PCs 2 gp per day each and 200 gp from the temple treasury to split between them if they remove the curse. He cannot come with them because he has to supervise the workers, but he can direct them toward the Serpent Bridge.

If the PCs do not explain themselves, they must make a Diplomacy check (DC 15) to get Pug to open up and possibly hire them. If the Diplomacy check fails, a successful Gather Information check (DC 10) reveals the details of the situation.

Development: In reality, there is no curse. Schleggit, the goblin rogue, and other goblins in Onugharra's band have caused the mishaps. The gnoll wizard Yeecha (see area **F4**) has *hypnotized* Pug into believing that the witch is responsible.

The *hypnotism* spell is no longer in effect (event though the suggestion is), so it cannot be discovered by a *detect magic* spell. If the PCs question Pug about why he suspects the witch, he gives only general reasons like "she's

POISON HEXBERRIES

Hexberries are often mistaken for wild blueberries, but they are very poisonous. Their value on the poison market is low because they lose their potency over time.

Hexberries: CR 1; ingested poison, Fortitude save negates (DC 14, incubation period 1 day, 1d6 temporary Str/1d6 temporary Str); Wilderness Lore (DC 15) to identify. Reduce the poison's DC by one for each week after berries are picked, or for each day before they are ripe.

evil," or "she's caused problems in this area before." If the PCs press him for more details, he gets increasingly irritated with their questions.

A successful Sense Motive (DC 25) or Spellcraft check (DC 21) reveals that Pug is under an outside influence. There are two ways the PCs can break Pug's hypnotic suggestion. The first is to question him under the influence of another *hypnotism* spell. While *hypnotized,* Pug remembers all the details of his first encounter with Yeecha and can be instructed to forget the suggestions Yeecha implanted. But Pug refuses to be *hypnotized* willingly. The second way involves showing Pug the dead body of Yeecha, which allows him a Will Save (DC 12) to remember everything and disregard the hypnotic suggestions.

Ad-hoc XP Award: If the PCs successfully remove Pug's hypnotic suggestion they should receive a special story award of 500 experience points.

Pug Highcourse, Male Dwarf Exp5: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 5d6+5; hp 25; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Atk +4 melee (1d8+1/crit ×3, warhammer); AL LG; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills: Appraise +10, Balance +7, Climb +7, Craft (stonemasonry) +12, Craft (blacksmithing) +10, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +6, Spot +3, Use Rope +6. *Feats:* Martial Weapon Proficiency (warhammer), Alertness.

Possessions: leather armor, warhammer, masterwork artisan's tools (stonemasonry), 15 pp, 90 gp, two well-cut amethysts (30 gp each).

B3. THE OLD TEMPLE OF KORD

Just north of the new temple's construction site is the old, wooden temple of Kord. Read the following if the PCs enter.

> Inside the temple you see a single, circular room about 20 feet across. A pit in the center is probably used for ritual fires, and a small opening at the peak of the roof lets the smoke out. Two old greatswords hang on opposite sides of the room.

The greatswords are primarily for decoration and ceremonies, but they can be used as weapons.

Creature (EL —): Jelup is here during the day. He is the town's only priest of Kord. He has established his reputation in the town by interpreting a vague dream as a vision from Kord himself. He proclaimed that Kord wanted a fine stone temple built in his name. In turn, Kord "promised" to rid the local woods of evil. Jelup is willing to use his skills to help anyone who is injured, as long as the characters are not openly hostile toward anyone in the town.

Jelup, Male Human Clr2 (Kord): CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d8+2; hp 15; Init –1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Atk +2 melee (2d6+1/crit 19–20, greatsword); AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref -1, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 12.

Skills: Diplomacy +6, Heal +7, Knowledge (religion) +5. *Feats:* Martial Weapon Proficiency (greatsword), Scribe Scroll.

Spells (4/4; base save DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, light, read magic;* 1st—*bless, comprehend languages, endure elements, protection from evil**.

*Domain Spell. *Domains:* Good (cast good spells at +1 caster level), Strength (+2 to Str for 1 round, 1/day).

Possessions: scroll of *protection from elements,* scroll of *cure light wounds* ×2, banded armor, greatsword, silver holy symbol of Kord.

B4. TRAPPER'S CABIN

A young hunter named Doeshine Trapper lives in a small cabin near the edge of the woods to the east of town. She lived there with her father, Nolan, and helped him hunt and trap in the woods until he was killed by a wild boar two years ago. She continues to make a meager living in the woods and avoids the townspeople when she can. She worked hard to learn to use her father's weapons and has studied wild boars, hoping to kill one herself—maybe even the one that killed her father.

Doeshine has seen goblin tracks in the woods to the east of town but has been unable to identify them. The PCs might want Doeshine to help them track the goblins,

GAINING THE WORKERS' RESPECT

The temple workers are a rowdy, opinionated bunch who view outsiders with suspicion. Their initial reaction toward the PCs is unfriendly (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* page 149).

When the PCs first meet the workers, they get one Diplomacy check to influence their attitude. The PCs can make additional Diplomacy checks to raise the workers' attitude further under each of the circumstances listed below. The workers' attitude determines how dedicated they are to the PCs in the Battle of New Pedwich (see encounter **J**).

Temple Worker Attitude Check Situations

PCs participate in contests at SlateJaw's.
PCs defeat gnoll scouting party (encounter **G**).
PCs clear Onugharra's camp (encounter **I**).
PCs defeat Yeecha and Amach (area **F4** and **F5**).
PCs break Pug's hypnotic suggestion.
PCs kill the "Gnasher" ankheg (random encounter).
PCs defeat the bandits (random encounter).
PCs make a donation of at least 10 gp to the temple.

but she is not interested unless they pay her 3 sp per day. If Doeshine is hired to track, that is all she does—she won't forage or fight, although when the attack on the town begins, she takes up her weapons if the fight goes poorly for the villagers. She *will* fight, however, if the party is attacked by a wild boar, and she takes the dead boar instead of her payment.

Doeshine, Female Human Rgr2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d10+2; hp 17; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Atk +2 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20, longsword) and +3 melee (1d4+2/crit 19–20, masterwork dagger), or +4 ranged (1d8+2/crit ×3, mighty composite longbow [+2 Str]); SA favored enemy (animals), two-weapon fighting ability; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +5, Knowledge Nature +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Spot +6, Use Rope +5, Wilderness Lore +6. *Feats:* Alertness, Improved Initiative.

Possessions: potion of hiding, leather armor, longsword, masterwork dagger, mighty composite longbow [+2 Str] with 20 arrows.

C. SERPENT BRIDGE (EL 8)

The Serpent Bridge crosses the river Clane three miles north of New Pedwich.

> A 30-foot wooden plank bridge crosses the river. It appears sturdy, resting 6 feet over rushing white water on three pairs of pilings. You also spot a large pile of bleached white bones on the north bank of the river, just at the edge of the woods to the west of the road.

The bridge is completely safe. When the PCs get close enough to the bones, they see that they form a nearly complete wyvern skeleton, placed in an animated pose. Voreo put the skeleton there long ago as a warning.

A successful Spot check (DC 21) reveals a white owl with large golden-brown eyes watching the PCs from far up in a tree. This is Agate, Voreo's familiar. It flies back towards Voreo's hut if it thinks the PCs have spotted it.

A PC searching near the wyvern skeleton finds a small footpath heading west. This path follows the north bank of the river and leads to Voreo's hut. If the PCs follow the path or stay more than half an hour at the bridge, Voreo arrives and tries to frighten them away.

Creature: The witch Voreo is a 144-year-old half-elf who has lived in the same area of the Stagnant Wood for almost one hundred years. She lives a completely solitary life but is very curious about New Pedwich. She uses her spells and familiar, Agate, to watch activities there. Voreo occasionally even risks visiting the town to sell sculptures, buy supplies, and get a firsthand look at the settlement. During these visits, she uses her *change self* spell to appear as a red-bearded, middle-aged, human male whom the townspeople know as Hermit Shen, the sculptor. She sometimes entertains herself by making harmless sculptures of people in the town (see encounter D).

Voreo, Female Half-elf Sor8: CR 8; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 8d4–16; hp 16; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 8, flat-footed 10; Atk +2 melee (1d6, quarterstaff); SA spells; SQ familiar; AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +8; Str 6, Dex 7, Con 7, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 18.

Skills: Alchemy +10, Concentration +6, Craft (sculpting) +6, Disguise +4, Hide –2 (+10 in toad form), Knowledge (arcana) +10, Listen +2 (+4 with familiar), Move Silently +0, Scry +10, Spellcraft +10, Spot +2 (+4 with familiar). *Feats:* Toughness, Spell Focus (Divination), Improved Initiative.

Languages: common, elven, gnoll, sylvan.

Familiar: Voreo has an owl familiar named Agate, who is described below. The special abilities the familiar provides to its master are described on page 51 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Spells (6/7/7/6/4; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, daze, dancing lights, detect magic, ghost sound, mage hand, mending, read magic*; 1st—*cause fear, change self, charm person, hypnotism, silent image*; 2nd—*scare, detect thoughts*, invisibility*; 3rd—*clairvoyance/clairaudience*, suggestion*; 4th—*polymorph self*.

*The base save DC for Divination spells is 16 + spell level due to Voreo's Spell Focus (Divination) feat.

Possessions: potion of blur, potion of invisibility, wand of charm person (5 charges), scroll of *improved invisibility, bracers of armor +1, cloak of resistance +1, ring of protection +1*, quarterstaff.

Voreo, Dire Bear Form: Large Animal; hp 16; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Atk melee +14 (2d4+10, 2 claws) and +14 (2d8+5, bite); SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 31, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 18.

Skills: as above.

Agate, Owl Familiar: CR 1/4; Tiny Magical Beast; HD 1d8; hp 8; Init +3; Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 18; Atk +5 melee (1d2–2, claws); SA Alertness, improved evasion, share spells, empathic link, touch, speak with master, speak with birds; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 14, Cha 4.

Skills: Hide +11, Listen +14, Move Silently +20, Spot +6.

See explanation of familiar abilities on page 51 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Tactics: Voreo wants to be left alone. She does everything she can to scare the PCs away but avoids really harming them. She casts *fear* and *scare* spells from hiding, then *polymorphs* herself into a diminutive, easily hidden creature like a Small viper. If she is in danger, she casts *invisibility* on herself and escapes.

If Voreo believes that the PCs will harm her, she begins using spells like *charm person* or *hypnotism* to turn members of the party against each other. If that doesn't work, or she would be at great risk using those spells, she *polymorphs* into her dire bear form, growls loudly, and attacks, again trying to frighten intruders away. If she takes any damage while in dire bear form, she runs away and changes back into her viper form to hide.

Note that Voreo's *polymorph self* spell lasts for 8 hours, during which time she can transform at will. See the *polymorph other* and *polymorph self* spell entries in the *Player's Handbook*, page 236.

Development: If the PCs are not scared off and manage to get as far as Voreo's hut, she uses her *detect thoughts* spell to see if they mean to harm her. If the PC's are not hostile, or if the PCs attempt to make peaceful contact with Voreo and make a successful Diplomacy check (DC 15), she approaches while invisible and tells them the following before disappearing into the woods.

"I have not cursed anyone. The town of New Pedwich is in great danger, but not from me. The answer lies south on the trail of the filthy dogfaces. Go east from town until you find it."

If Voreo is killed and the PCs believe the curse might be lifted, the DM should arrange another accident at the temple that night and add some urgency to Old Hentoe's story about Pug following an "imp" into the woods (see area **B1**).

Ad-hoc XP Award: If the PCs manage to make peaceful contact with Voreo, they should be awarded experience as if they defeated her.

D. WITCH'S HUT

The overgrown path leading west from Serpent Bridge follows the north bank of the River Clane for about one mile, then turns into the woods for about 100 yards before reaching Voreo's hut.

The path leads to a very small clearing surrounded by a mesh of gnarled vines growing between the trees. Humanoid heads, long dried and disfigured, hang from the vines. In the center of the clearing is a small mud and wattle hut covered with hides. You also see a fire pit, a rack holding strips of drying meat, and a structure that looks like a 7-foot-tall stone beehive.

The fire pit is cold. The heads and meat are from captured gnolls; a successful Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 13) reveals this. The beehive is actually a kiln. It is currently fired and very hot. One side of the kiln has an opening closed off with a stack of bricks and rocks.

If the PCs examine the hut, read the following:

The inside of the hut is very plain, with a dirt floor, no decorations, and no windows. A sleeping mat lays on one side, and a small wooden chest on the other. Bodies of small rodents hang by their tails from the low ceiling.

The wooden chest contains fourteen small ceramic figures sculpted by Voreo. They depict mostly humans, plus a single dwarf and halfling. Any PC who has met Pug Highcourse or Old Hentoe and examines the figures can attempt a Spot check (DC 12) to notice that the dwarf and halfling figurines closely resemble them. In fact, each figure in the chest is modeled after someone in the town. Voreo made these figures and fired them in her kiln outside, which currently contains figures depicting five townspeople and two of the PCs.

The chest also contains material components for Voreo's spells, including a jar of eyelashes, a small bag of cocoons, owl feathers, and a vial of gray bone fragments.

E. GNOLL TRAILS

The closest gnoll trail is less than two miles to the east of New Pedwich. The PCs might find it by following Hentoe's "imp" tracks, or by taking the witch's advice to look east of town.

A clearly defined path, packed hard from untold years of steady use, runs north and south through the woods.

A Successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 16) reveals goblin and gnoll prints going both directions on the trail, as well as one set of booted prints (Pug's) going south. If the PCs follow the path south, they find the cave entrance to the Shrine of Yeenoghu (see encounter **F**). If they follow the trail north, they run into the gnoll scouting party (see encounter **G**) and the gnoll encampment (encounters **H** and **I**).

F. SHRINE OF YEENOGHU

At the south end of the gnoll trail is the entrance to the underground shrine of the gnoll demon lord Yeenoghu.

The trail ends at a limestone face. A dark, triangular cave leads down into the rock. It appears big enough for a large man to fit through without trouble. Crude, slouching stick figures with jutting mouths are carved into the rock on either side of the opening.

Dungeon Features: The Shrine of Yeenoghu is entirely made up of natural caverns etched into the limestone by eons of flowing water.

Floors and Ceilings: In the lower caverns, these surfaces are covered with stalagmites and stalactites, hampering movement as a bad surface (1/2 movement—see the *Player's Handbook* **Table 9–4**). The Shrine's upper caverns are well worn from centuries of gnoll traffic and allow normal movement.

Light: Gnolls have darkvision, so they have no need of light sources. The entire shrine is completely dark except for area **F5**.

F1. HIDDEN PASSAGE

About 30 feet into the cave, a side passage opens to the north. Due to the geometry of the tunnel, it appears as a dead-end alcove in the tunnel wall and is effectively hidden. A successful Search check (DC 15) reveals its presence. The gnolls who visit the shrine of Yeenoghu know about this passage and use it to avoid the bridge in area **F2**.

F2. BRIDGE (EL 2)

A wooden plank bridge spans 15 feet across a deep chasm. On the opposite side of the bridge is a broad ledge, beyond which is a large, open cavern.

Trap: The bridge is a trap released when it holds 80 pounds or more, splitting in half and falling against the sides of the pit.

Spiked Pit Trap (30 ft. deep): CR 2; no attack roll necessary (3d6), +10 melee, (1d4 spikes for 1d4+3 points of damage per successful hit); Reflex save (DC 20); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

Development: If any PCs fall victim to the trap, they end up at the bottom of the pit in area **F13**. If the PCs set off the trap, or are carrying light sources and spend time examining the bridge, the gnolls in area **F3** detect them and come to investigate.

F3. GATHERING CAVERN (EL 5)

This large, natural cavern is littered with small bones and scraps of tattered cloth and leather. Small, sightless insects skitter along the filthy floor and smooth walls. A dim pool of light glimmers from somewhere to the west.

Gnolls visiting the shrine gather in this cavern before entering cavern **F5** for Amach's ceremonies. It is also used as a sort of inn for traveling gnolls passing through the area.

Creatures: Two gnolls stand guard here near the tunnel intersections on the west side of the cavern. The wizard Yeecha is also nearby, in room F4. He comes to the gnolls' aid if they raise the alarm.

Gnolls (2): hp 9, 13; *Monster Manual* 105. Each gnoll carries 50 sp.

Tactics: If the gnolls hear the party set off the bridge trap or see the party's lights in area **F2**, they come within 60 feet to get a good look. If the party outnumbers them and appears armed, they begin barking and howling loudly to alert the other gnolls in the shrine before moving quickly back to the west end of the room. Yeecha meets them there 2 rounds after they raise the alarm. Amach and her goblin servants hear the alarm, but remain in area **F5**.

If the gnolls see only one or two members of the party, they attack without raising the alarm, hoping to keep any spoils to themselves. Yeecha hears but assumes the gnolls are fighting each other.

F4. YEECHA'S LAIR (EL VARIABLE)

This cavern appears lived-in. Tattered and soiled tapestries adorn the walls, and many of the natural rock formations have been converted to furniture. A chipped ceramic basin of water sits on a ledge near the door, along with large pieces of meat. In the opposite corner of the room a decrepit writing desk with two missing legs sits propped at a slight angle on top of stalagmites. Papers and small clay vials are scattered across it.

YEECHA'S JOURNAL

The journal entries are written in Gnoll and seem to be worded as short reports to a superior. A few of the more interesting entries are as follows:

• I must gather enough of the poison and be ready when the Kord-slaves harvest their grain. I will give them the slow, painful death Yeenoghu demands.

• Onugharra has come now, camping to the north and working with the filthy humans from outside. He is impatient and clumsy. His goblins are raising suspicion in the town, and I fear he will attack before our plan is ready.

He has even forsaken Yeenoghu for their god. No wonder the spirits below are restless.

• Yeenoghu has heard our pleas. The bumbling dwarf from the town wandered into our caverns today. I managed to entrance him and convince him that the old witch to the north is the cause of their troubles. Now that I have deflected the townspeople's attention from the idiot goblins, Onugharra can delay his attack and I can proceed with mine.

• The arrogant animal still plans to attack in the next few days. If he does, he goes without Yeenoghu's aid—or mine.

If no one in the party speaks Gnoll, and no spellcasters have access to the *comprehend languages* spell, you should make sure the cleric Jelup finds out about the journal and offers to help decipher it.

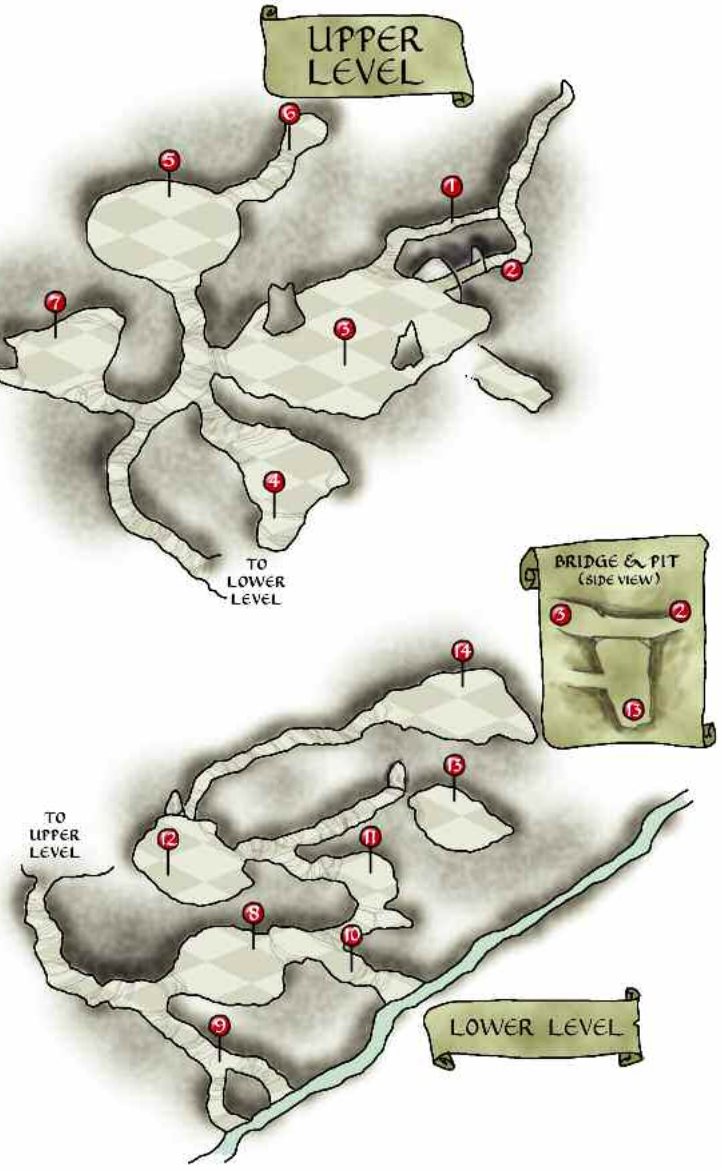
Creatures (EL 0 or EL 3): This is the cavern where the gnoll wizard Yeecha lives. If he did not join the fight in area **F3** or **F5**, he faces the PCs here. Yeecha has black fur over most of his body, much darker than the gnolls in area **F3**. He wears only a leather loincloth, along with a belt and sash to hold his scrolls, potions, spell components, and wand.

Yeecha, Male Gnoll Wiz3: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d8+2 plus 3d4+8; hp 28; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Atk +4 melee (1d8+2/crit ×3, battleaxe); AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Alchemy +4, Concentration +5, Listen +4, Spellcraft +4, Spot +4. *Feats:* Combat Casting, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll, Martial Weapon Proficiency (battleaxe).

Spells (4/3/1; base save DC = 11 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, ghost sound, ray of frost, read magic;* 1st—*color spray, mage armor, sleep;* 2nd—*Tasha's hideous laughter.*

Possessions: bracers of armor +1, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of invisibility, scroll of *charm person,* scroll of *hypnotism, wand of magic missile* (1st level, 15 charges), battleaxe, 90 gp, 120 sp.



Tactics: Before entering battle, Yeecha casts *mage armor*. Then he tries to defeat invaders with his *color spray* and *sleep* spells. If any enemies still threaten him, he uses one or two charges from his wand, and if he faces a small party, *Tasha's hideous laughter*. If Yeecha is seriously wounded, he drinks his *potion of invisibility,* slips out of battle, drinks his *potion of cure moderate wounds,* then heads for area **F5**, where he makes a final stand with Amach.

Treasure: The tapestries are in terrible shape and are worthless. The water basin holds water brought by goblin slaves from the underground stream in area **F9**. The meat is wild boar meat and is an offering from the two gnolls in area **F3**. The writing table contains a scroll of *color spray,* four sheets of parchment, a vial of ink, and a quill. The four vials contain common alchemy ingredients (20 gp). The drawer of the table contains a crudely bound set of parchment sheets. This is Yeecha's journal (see sidebar).

A successful Search check (DC 20) reveals a small recess in the rock, about 8 feet up behind one of the tapestries. Inside is Yeecha's spellbook, which contains the following spells: 0—all; 1st—*change self, color spray, enlarge, identify, mage armor, sleep;* 2nd—*invisibility, Tasha's hideous laughter.*

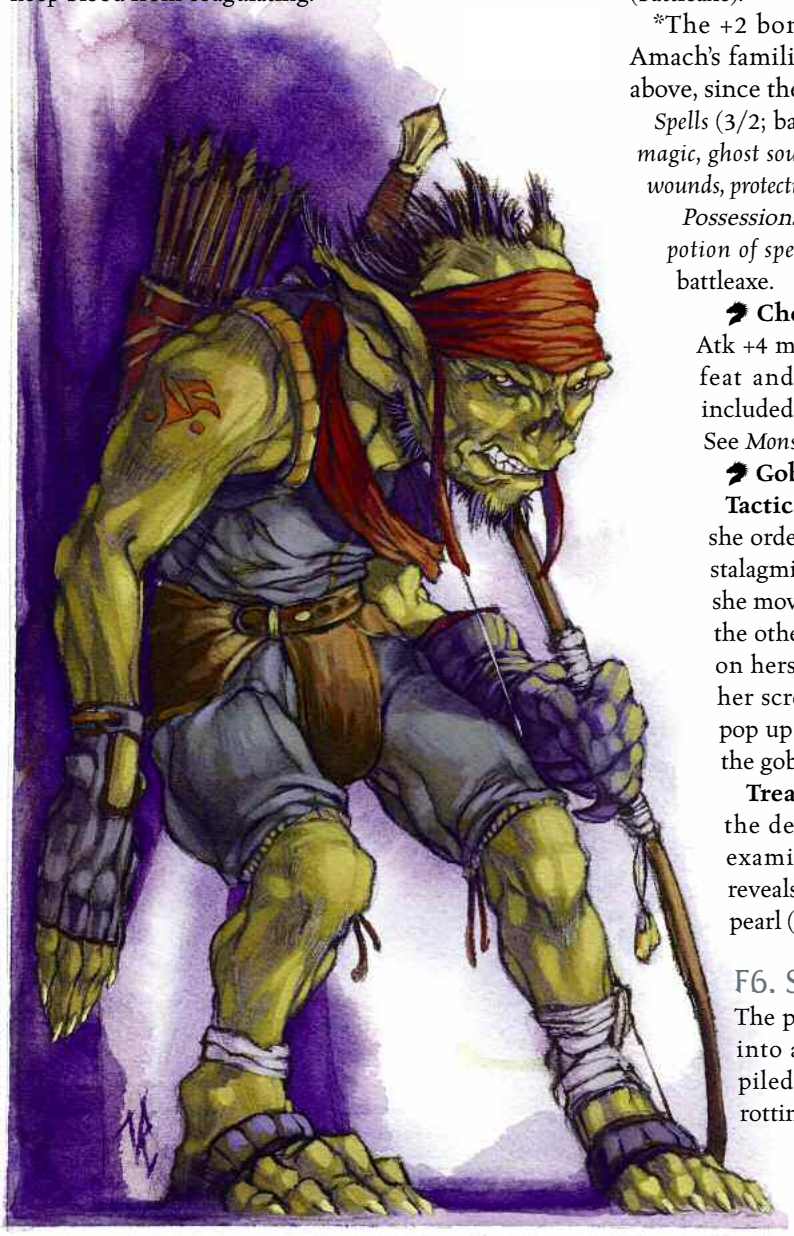
F5. THE SHRINE CAVERN (EL 3)

A fire burns in a pit in the center of this round, high cavern. Its dancing light makes the crude stick-figure paintings that cover the smooth walls and ceiling seem to come to life. The smooth, clean floor rises toward the back of the cavern, where a 9-foot-tall, dark

stone figure of an emaciated, hyena-faced humanoid stares into the fire, laughing. Two flattened stalagmites on either side of the chamber act as small tables. A shallow bowl sits on one and a clay jug on the other.

This is the shrine of Yeenoghu, a place of what little religious ceremony the gnolls of the Stagnant Wood undertake. The figures on the wall are very crude, scratched into the stone or drawn with charcoal or blood. The statue, however, is reasonably good workmanship. Anyone who makes a successful Craft (stonemasonry) check (DC 15) can tell that it is at least 500 years old and made of dark, stained limestone, probably drawn from the same quarry that New Pedwich is using for its temple.

The shallow bowl is filled with the blood of past sacrifices and is used for Amach's daily ceremonies. The clay jug contains alcohol from distilled wine and is used to keep blood from coagulating.



Creatures: The gnoll adept Amach is in this room, keeping the fire going and making offerings to Yeenoghu. She also has four goblin slaves as assistants. Amach's fur is much lighter than other gnolls, and the mane on the back of her neck has grown long and been wound into a pony tail strung with small bones. Her rat familiar, Choaz, clings tightly to her shoulder.

If the PCs have not fought Yeecha, he joins the fight in this room 2 rounds after combat begins.

Amach, Female Gnoll Adp2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d8+2 plus 2d6+2; hp 22; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17; Atk +4 melee (1d8+2/crit ×3, battleaxe); AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration +3, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +7*, Spot +7*. *Feats:* Alertness (from familiar), Scribe Scroll, Power Attack, Martial Weapon Proficiency (battleaxe).

*The +2 bonus to Spot and Listen checks from Amach's familiar are already factored in to the skills above, since the rat never leaves Amach's side.

Spells (3/2; base save DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, ghost sound, purify food and drink*; 1st—*cure light wounds, protection from good.*

Possessions: scroll of *sleep, potion of cure light wounds, potion of speak with animals,* large wooden shield, battleaxe.

Choaz, Rat Familiar: HD 3; hp 11; AC 14; Atk +4 melee (1d3–4 bite); Int 7; Adds Alertness feat and +2 to Fortitude saves (both already included in Amach's statistics); improved evasion. See *Monster Manual* 201.

Goblins (4): hp 4 each; *Monster Manual* 107.

Tactics: If Amach hears the PCs approaching, she orders two of the goblins to hide behind the stalagmite tables at either side of the fire pit, and she moves just inside the passage to area **F6** with the other two. She then casts *protection from good* on herself. If the PCs enter the room, she uses her scroll of *sleep,* and the two hidden goblins pop up and throw javelins. Then Amach and all the goblins attack with melee weapons.

Treasure: The adept stores any offerings to the demon lord in area **F6**, but a successful examination of the statue (Search DC 12) reveals that its mouth contains a precious black pearl (600 gp).

F6. SHRINE TREASURY

The passage from the shrine room descends into a small, damp chamber. The room is piled with rusting tools and weapons, and rotting cloth.

The adepts of Yeenoghu store offerings made to the demon lord here. Piles of once fine clothes, furs, weapons, and armor rot and rust in the wet slime of this chamber. A successful Appraise check (DC 12) reveals that the following items could be salvaged: three daggers, a light mace, a short sword, a longsword, and a Small chain shirt. A successful Search check (DC 15) uncovers a tiny alcove in the rock wall about 5 feet above the ground (out of goblin sight and reach). In it hides a sack containing 750 gp and 1,100 sp.

F7. SLAVE WORK ROOM

This long, thin cavern is full of stalactites, stalagmites, and large rocks. Piles of bones, crude tools, and clay jars are visible in cleared areas of the ground.

This is the cavern where the goblin slaves in area **F8** do much of their work, including butchering the gnolls' prey, sharpening the gnolls' weapons, and brewing the wine used for Amach's ceremonies.

F8. GOBLIN SLAVE CHAMBER (EL 1)

This small, low-ceilinged cavern contains eight large clay jars. The lower 4 feet of the cavern walls are covered with dark hash marks and crosses. The sound of nearby rushing water echoes through the chamber.

The shrine's goblin slaves sleep and rest here when they are not working in the upper levels. The markings on the wall are their crude method of determining whose turn it is to work.

Creatures: Four goblins currently rest in this room. They fight until two of them are defeated. The remaining goblins then attempt to run to the upper levels for help.

Goblins (4): hp 4 each; *Monster Manual* 107.

Development: Five of the jars are nearly full of crushed hexberries (see sidebar). When New Pedwich's harvest is complete, Yeecha plans to use these jars to poison the town's grain supplies so that the townspeople starve over the winter.

F9. UNDERGROUND STREAM (EL 3)

The passage splits into two short, damp passages, both of which end at a fast-flowing underground stream.

The stream serves as the source of water for the shrine's residents. It is clean and safe to drink. The stream is about 8 feet wide and 6 feet deep along most of its course. It moves quickly west over rocks and around corners, creating rushing water sounds throughout the lower caverns.

Trap: Any PC who approaches the edge of the stream without being extremely careful must make a Reflex save or slip and fall in. A successful Swim check (DC 15) is required to get back out or swim upstream. If a character fails a Swim check by more then 5, he is swept downstream and must make another Swim check (DC 15) to avoid taking 4d8 points of damage from rocks or possibly drowning. The stream carries the character for 10 minutes until he emerges from the ground just south of New Pedwich.

Rushing Stream Trap: CR 3; no attack roll necessary (see above); Reflex save (DC 15); Search (DC 15); Disable Device N/A.

F10. MOLD PASSAGE (EL 2)

A short, narrow passage leads from the caverns down to a rushing stream. The air here feels cooler than in the surrounding caverns.

Trap: Midway along this tunnel is a 3-foot patch of brown mold. Brown mold feeds on warmth, drawing heat from anything around it. Living creatures within 5 feet of it take 3d6 points of cold subdual damage. Fire brought within 5 feet of the mold causes it to instantly double in size. Cold damage instantly destroys it.

Brown Mold: CR 2; no attack roll necessary (3d6); Spot (DC 20); Disable Device N/A. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 117, for details.

Development: Yeecha has been unable to destroy the brown mold infestation in the lower caverns. If the entire party ends up unconscious in the mold, assume the mold contracts far enough after one day for the PCs to begin recovering. After that time, the grick in area **F12** is free to approach and carry one PC off to area **F12**, then kill them and eat them. It returns for another PC every 3d8 hours.

F11. GRICK AMBUSH (EL 3)

Creature: A grick lies in hiding in one of the many alcoves and crevices along this passage. If it manages to incapacitate or drive off all the PCs, it drags one of them back to area **F12** to eat.

Grick (1): hp 9; *Monster Manual* 112.

F12. GRICK LAIR

The floor of this cavern is very rough and strewn with bones, tattered cloth, rusting metal, and slime. The walls are jagged and the ceiling varies in height from 8 to 25 feet. A wide crevice in the north wall leads down into damp darkness.

The grick sleeps and devours its prey here. The possessions of its victims lie scattered about. If the grick has not been defeated and hears the PCs, it comes here from area **F11** and attacks.

Treasure: Sorting through the piles of remains produces 7,000 cp, 300 sp, a masterwork longbow (375 gp), 20 arrows (1 gp), and a suit of banded mail (250 gp).

F13. BRIDGE PIT

This is the pit beneath the bridge at area **F2**. The floor is covered with sharp stalagmites. The bones of a small humanoid lie directly below the bridge.

Development: Characters at the bottom of the pit can Climb (DC 15 each round) to area **F2** or **F3** (30 feet up) or to the passage to the lower caverns (15 feet up). If anyone in this pit talks loud enough for someone at the level of the bridge to hear, the grick in area **F11** also hears and comes looking for prey. The grick is very familiar with the pit and gets a +4 circumstance bonus to its Climb checks.

F14. TOMB OF YEENOGHU'S CHAMPIONS (EL 3)

The tunnel ends in a damp, triangular cavern. On the floor are three stone slabs about 6 feet by 3 feet. On two of the slabs lie the skeletal remains and rotted clothing of humanoid creatures. The third slab appears empty.

Creature: This cavern contains the open tombs of three heroes of Yeenoghu who fought hundreds of years ago when the gnolls were driving orcs and ogres from the Stagnant Wood. One of the heroes has been roused from its rest because Onugharra's gnolls have forsaken Yeenoghu. It haunts the lower caverns as a wight. The creature wears badly tattered leather armor and the fur is missing from most of its body.

Wight (1): hp 26; *Monster Manual* 183.

Tactics: If the wight hears the PCs coming, it Hides among the rocks and tries to get behind the characters, cutting off their retreat. It concentrates its attacks on a single character, trying to create a spawn. If the PCs flee, the wight and any spawn chase them as far as area **F11**.

Treasure: The cherished possessions of the three heroes where placed on the slabs with them. Time and moisture has destroyed nearly everything, but the following items survived: finely worked gold bracers (200 gp), masterwork heavy mace (312 gp), and a tattered leather sash encrusted with the following gems: a black pearl (500 gp), two silver pearls (200 gp each), and a small jade jackal head (150 gp).

G. GNOLL SCOUTING PARTY (EL 4)

If the PCs head north up the gnoll trail, either to investigate the entries in Yeecha's journal or because of the map found on Atwan, they come across a gnoll scouting party heading south.

Creatures: A single, lightly-armored gnoll leads two goblins and the goblin rogue, Schleggit.

Gnoll (1): hp 12; Spd 30; AC 15 (+1 natural, +3 studded leather, +1 small wooden shield); *Monster Manual* 105. The gnoll carries a pouch with 20 gp in addition to his weapons and armor.

Goblins (2): hp 4 each; *Monster Manual* 107.

Schleggit, Male Goblin Rog3: CR 3; Small Humanoid (goblinoid); HD 3d6+3; hp 18; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 17; Atk +5 melee (1d6+1/crit 19–20, masterwork short sword); or +7 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, masterwork composite shortbow); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Appraise +6, Climb +7, Hide +13, Listen +9, Move Silently +13, Spot+9, Tumble +9, Use Rope +9. *Feats:* Alertness, Improved Initiative.

Possessions: potion of cure light wounds, potion of hiding, masterwork studded leather, masterwork buckler, masterwork short sword, dagger, masterwork composite shortbow with 20 arrows, map of New Pedwich, red garnet (120 gp), 80 gp.

Tactics: If the scouting party sees or hears the PCs before they are detected, the gnoll runs back to warn Onugharra's camp and the goblins hide in the woods beside the trail. As soon as the PCs pass the hiding goblins, or the goblins are spotted by the PCs, they make one attack with ranged weapons (possibly a sneak attack by Schleggit) and scatter into the woods.

Development: If the gnoll escapes this fight, he warns the camp (see area **I**). If Schleggit escapes, he takes part in the final attack on the town (see area **J**). If the PCs capture a goblin and demand that it lead them to the camp, it does, but it makes sure that the goblin picket at area **H** sees or hears them and sounds the alarm.

H. GOBLIN PICKET (EL 1/4)

If the PCs follow the gnoll trail two miles north of the encounter with the gnoll scouting party (area **G**), they come across Onugharra's encampment. The camp is screened by goblin pickets who raise the alarm with small horns if intruders approach

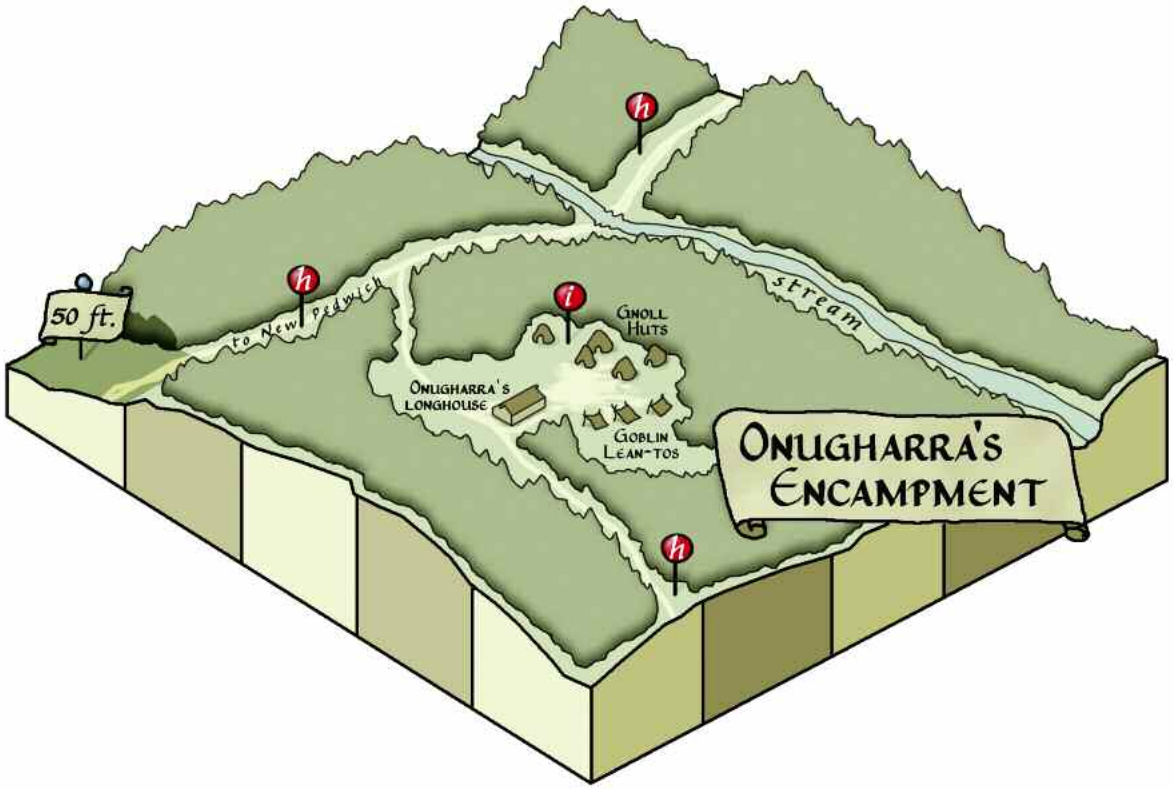
Creatures: A single goblin hides in the woods to sound the alarm with his horn as his first full-round action after spotting the PCs. After blowing the horn, he tries to run away and hide.

Goblin (1): hp 4; *Monster Manual* 107.

I. GNOLL ENCAMPMENT (EL 5)

A small, muddy clearing opens up to the east side of the trail. You see seven or eight small stick and mud huts within its confines. A few humanoids of various sizes move among them, barking and growling at each other.

Onugharra has established his camp where two of the main gnoll trails meet, just south of the river Clane. His band is gathering here to attack the town.



Creatures: Onugharra and his army currently hunt a small band of orcs in the woods to the east. He has left one of his new barbarian friends and some gnolls and orcs to defend his camp and treasure.

Gnoll (2): hp 11 each; *Monster Manual* 105.

Orcs (2): hp 4 each; *Monster Manual* 146.

Hannok, Male Half-orc Bbn3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 3d12+3; hp 28; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 15; +7 melee ((+3 base, +3 str, +1 Focus)) (1d12+4/crit ×3, greataxe); SA rage; SQ uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CG; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +6, Intimidate +4, Jump +6, Listen +4, Wilderness Lore +3. *Feats:* Weapon Focus (greataxe), Dodge.

Rage (Ex): During his rage, Hannok's statistics change as follows: hp 34, AC 13, Atk +9 melee (1d12+7/crit ×3, greataxe); SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 21, Con 16. *Skills:* Climb +8, Jump +8.

Possessions: potion of cure moderate wounds, studded leather armor, greataxe, 87 gp, holy symbol of Erythnul.

Tactics: If the gnoll from the scouting party made it back to warn the camp or the goblin picket raised the alarm, the camp is warned and all of the camp's occupants remain fully armed and watchful for 2d6 hours.

If the alarm has not been raised, the gnolls are ready, but the orcs must return to their huts to get their melee weapons, delaying them for 2 rounds. The barbarian Hannok sleeps in the nearest, largest hut, emerging in round 3 of battle with his weapon ready. As soon as any camp occupant has a weapon ready, it attacks. Hannock rages when the first gnoll is killed, if he is wounded, or if he is woken from his sleep.

Treasure: The largest hut contains a very old and worn wooden chest, wrapped with rope to keep it together. It holds the gathered treasure of Onugharra's band: 1,100 gp, 400 sp, two gems (alexandrite, 300 gp and yellow topaz, 200 gp), *potion of alter self, potion of darkvision,* large silver symbol of Erythnul.

Development: It should be apparent to the PCs that the buildings in this clearing could house more creatures than rest here now. Onugharra returns to his camp an hour or two before dark on the third day of the adventure. If he finds his camp has been attacked, he gives orders to attack New Pedwich immediately after sunset.

J. THE BATTLE OF NEW PEDWICH (EL 6)

Onugharra's band attacks New Pedwich on the third night of the adventure, just after sunset. This gives the gnolls 2 hours of darkness before moonrise to use the advantage of

their darkvision. If the PCs attack the gnoll encampment, (see encounter **I**) the attack might come sooner.

When Onugharra attacks, the town is warned by the wild barking, yipping, and insane hyenalike laughter from all sides of the clearing as Onugharra's orders to attack are passed along. Townspeople gather on the green near the new temple and Pug takes immediate command. He takes ten of the temple workers to defend the bridges east of town. He sends the PCs and five of the temple workers, including Korrin, to guard the west side of town. Jelup, Hentoe, and the rest of the temple workers stay at Slatejaw's to help the wounded and act as a reserve. All other townspeople hide in Slatejaw's or in their homes. The gnolls already sound like they are inside the clearing, so no further discussion takes place. When the PCs reach their post, the lead gnolls are already within 100 feet of the town.

If the attitude of the temple workers toward the PCs is helpful, those assigned to the PCs stay and fight. If they are friendly, only Korrin stands his ground while the rest desert and run back to Slatejaw's as soon as they see the gnolls. If the workers' attitude is less than friendly, they all run.

Creatures: Onugharra's largest force has circled around the town and comes right at the PCs from the woods to the west. The force consists of Onugharra himself, the barbarian priest Atwan, 2 gnolls, 2 orcs, and 2 goblin archers. If the PCs have not defeated the gnoll scouting party (encounter **G**) they face one additional gnoll. If the rogue Schleggit is still alive, he sneaks into the center of town and joins the battle against the PCs in round 6. Also, if the PCs have yet to travel to Onugharra's encampment, the gnoll barbarian attacks accompanied by Hannok, two more goblins, and two more gnolls.

Onugharra is an imposing creature—larger and stronger than the other gnolls, with his mane hair gathered into dozens of spikes capped by raven feathers.

Atwan is a young cleric of Erythnul, sent by the barbarian overlord to convert the gnolls. He is a tall human with long, blond hair, but he appears small beside Onugharra. He wears a dark red robe over his armor.

Gnoll (2): hp 10, 12; *Monster Manual* 105.

Orcs (2): hp 4 each; *Monster Manual* 146.

Goblin Archers (2): hp 3 each; Atk +3 ranged (1d8/crit 19–20, light crossbow); *Monster Manual* 107.

Onugharra, Male Gnoll Rgr3: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 3d10+6; hp 40; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Atk +7 melee (1d8+4/crit 19–20, masterwork longsword) and +7 melee (1d6+3/crit 19–20, *+1 short sword*), or +6 ranged (1d8+3/crit ×3, mighty composite longbow [+3]); SA favored enemy (orcs), two-weapon fighting ability; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7, Wilderness Lore +4. *Feats:* Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Power Attack, Track.

Possessions: +1 short sword, cloak of resistance +1, potion of cure light wounds ×2, masterwork studded leather, masterwork longsword, mighty composite longbow [+3] with 20 arrows, 140 gp.

Atwan, Male Human Clr2 (Erythnul): CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d8+2; hp 15; Init –1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16; Atk +3 melee (1d8+2, morningstar); AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref –1, Will +6; Str 15, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 16, Cha 15.

Skills: Concentration +7, Heal +6, Knowledge (religion) +2, Spellcraft +5. *Feats:* Scribe Scroll, Combat Casting.

Spells (4/4; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, light, resistance;* 1st—*cause fear, doom, cure light wounds, protection from good**.

*Domain Spell. *Domains:* Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, Hide are class skills).

Possessions: scroll of protection from good, scroll of cure light wounds ×2, *potion of blur* ×2, splint mail, small wooden shield, morningstar, holy symbol of Erythnul, 25 sp. Atwan also carries a crude map of the Stagnant Wood showing the Woods Road, the gnoll trails, and the locations of Onugharra's camp and the town of New Pedwich.

Tactics: Onugharra keeps his goblin archers back to shoot at enemies not engaged in melee. He sends his gnolls, orcs, and remaining goblins forward to attack immediately. He personally gets within 30 feet and shoots his bow at spellcasters and other troublemakers for 3 rounds before dropping it and using both swords to attack whichever enemy appears most threatening. Onugharra has the Precise Shot feat and can shoot into melee without penalty.

Atwan drinks a *potion of blur* and casts *protection from good* on Onugharra. He then casts *cause fear* and *doom* on the toughest-looking enemy. After that, he uses his *cure light wounds* spell and scrolls on himself and Onugharra when needed and avoids melee combat. If Onugharra is defeated, Atwan attempts to flee.

Development: If the PCs have not defeated the goblin rogue Schleggit (encounter **G**), he crosses the river unseen from the east and sneaks into the shadows around the new temple, waiting for a chance to kill Jelup. The rogue manages to make a sneak attack on the priest with his bow in round 3 of the battle and another hit the following round, seriously wounding him (hp –2). Old Hentoe and three temple workers come to Jelup's aid. Schleggit flees to the west, reaching the PCs in round 6.

Pug's squad faces 3 gnolls, 3 orcs, and 4 goblins at the south bridge, not far from the new temple. Pug's force wins this battle, but two temple workers die and Pug is dying by the end of round 6. If Jelup has not been attacked by Schleggit, he reaches Pug and stabilizes him.

If Jelup is down, one of the PCs must reach Pug by round 12, or he dies.

If the PCs run from the fight, the defenders of the town are soundly defeated, and the town is completely destroyed. All the inhabitants are driven into the woods or killed.

If the PCs retreat to the center of town, the attackers pursue them. If Jelup has not been attacked by Schleggit, he assists the PCs after helping Pug. If the attitude of the temple workers toward the PCs is at least helpful, three more of them join the fight.

If Onugharra is defeated, the rest of his band immediately runs into the woods for safety. Any gnolls still alive in the group attacking the PCs begin barking to notify the rest of the band of the tragedy, so the battle at the south bridge ends 1 round later.

CONCLUSION

If the PCs defeated Onugharra, either at the encampment or in the battle at the town, they are received as heroes in New Pedwich. They are also allowed to keep any possessions of the gnolls that they find—although a donation to the construction of the temple would be greatly appreciated. The temple workers become helpful to the PCs if they are not already.

If Pug survived the battle, he gladly pays them the 200 gp he offered for their services. The shock of the battle and his injuries have broken the effects of his *hypnotism*, and Pug remembers his encounter with Yeecha. If the Shrine of Yeenoghu has not yet been cleared, he begs the PCs to investigate the cave. Both Pug and Korrin offer to come along if the PCs need help.

If he is able, Jelup presides over a special ceremony for the dead outside the old temple. During the ceremony he thanks Kord for fulfilling his vision and sending the PCs to protect the hamlet from the evil in the woods. All who fell in the battle are buried in a special section of a new cemetery beside the new temple.

The PCs are welcome to stay at Slatejaw's as long as they like and will always be welcome back. Their names become legends in this sleepy hamlet. Construction of the temple continues under the direction of Pug, if he survived the battle, or Korrin if Pug did not survive.

Onugharra's warband and the keepers of the Shrine of Yeenoghu are not the only gnolls in the Stagnant Wood, nor are they the only threat to the town. The map of the woods found on Atwan might lead to a larger gnoll community or more sinister Yeenoghu worship site.

A letter in Atwan's pocket might instruct him to inform Onugharra that the barbarian warlord is planning to support the gnolls with an attack against the humans in the Stagnant Woods. The temple in New Pedwich will be completed the following spring, and the PCs could be invited as guests of honor at a special festival. This could coincide with the barbarian warlord's spring campaign against the town. Ω

Russ writes emergency room software in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He would like to thank his wife, Pam, for letting him raise their sons, Andy and Alex, on Dungeons & Dragons. *His other playtesters included cousin Pete and the Boar's Head group.*

CRITICAL THREATS

BY MATTHEW SERNETT
ARTWORK BY KYLE HUNTER

YU'THIOL MANSECHO

The cagey Yu'thiol Mansecho is a githyanki from the Astral Plane, but none of his employers suspect that—few ever hear his real name. All they know is that the mysterious figure they hired as a spy, assassin, or blackmailer is good at his job.

Yu'thiol moves from city to city, establishing a fake identity in the local underworld, using disguises and magic to hide his visage. Once he has earned a suitably dangerous reputation, he hires himself out to anyone who'll have him, often charging only a nominal fee. Yu'thiol only pretends to be devoted to the "art" of whatever foul deeds his employers pay him to commit, but he is truly a master of subterfuge and deception.

Yu'thiol Mansecho is a spy for hire, but few suspect the depth of his treachery. No matter who Yu'thiol works for, his ultimate loyalty lies with the Lich Queen of the githyanki. Each month, Yu'thiol *planeshifts* to the Astral Plane to report what he has learned on the Prime. Working as a spy allows Yu'thiol to learn a great deal of information useful to the insanely power-hungry Lich Queen. If the Lich Queen considers them a threat to her plans, Yu'thiol's old employers die violently and suddenly. Of course, by then Yu'thiol has another name in a city far away.

Male Githyanki Rog4/Ftr2/Ill4: Medium-size Outsider (evil); HD 4d6+8 plus 2d10+4 plus 4d4+8; hp 68; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 20; Atk +14/+9 melee (2d6+7/crit 19–20, silver sword) or +9/+4 ranged (1d8/crit x3, composite longbow); SA psionics, sneak attack +2d6; SQ psionics, evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); SR 15; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +15*, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +14*, Disguise +16*, Gather Information +15*, Hide +13 (+29**), Move Silently +13, Open Locks +13, Spellcraft +13, Tumble +12. *Feats:* Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (silver sword), Iron Will, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (silver sword).

Psionics (Sp): At will—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, dimension door, mage hand, telekinesis;* 1/day—*planeshift*. Caster level 16th; base save DC = 13 + spell level.

Spellbook: 0—all except *ray of frost;* 1st—*charm person, change self*, comprehend languages, ray of enfeeblement, shield, silent image*, true strike;* 2nd—*alter self*, bull's strength, invisibility*, locate object, obscure object, minor image*, mirror image*, see invisibility*.

*Illusion spells. *Prohibited school:* Conjuration.

Possessions: silver sword, +2 glamered studded leather, circlet of persuasion, ring of mind shielding, medallion of thoughts, robe of blending**, ring of protection +1, amulet of natural armor +2,* composite longbow with 30 arrows.

APPEARANCE

Yu'thiol Mansecho rarely appears in his true form. Burying his identity and origins beneath layered magical and mundane disguises, the cautious spy often kills those who see his true face.

TACTICS

Yu'thiol always wears a disguise he creates with the Disguise skill and makes his glamered armor look like clothing or armor appropriate to the persona he creates. On most days, he uses the *change self* spell to appear as the same creature, hoping that if any magic pierces the veil of his magic disguise, his mundane disguise will fool viewers long enough for him to slay them or make his escape. When Yu'thiol knows he will engage in combat with spellcasting foes, he often makes up his mundane disguise to look like an enemy who has no alibi for the time of the battle.

Yu'thiol makes good use of his spells. He prefers to wait in ambush for an enemy, hiding near the path of foes to attack from a short distance with his bow. He then attempts to render himself *invisible* and *dimension door* to a distance beyond the range of *dispel magic* and *see invisibility* spells. While invisible, he takes stock of his enemies' reaction and casts defensive magic. He then uses a *silent image* to make a version of himself appear within sight of his opponents. Once they charge the illusion, he uses *dimension door* again to engage a weak foe and make a sneak attack.

If all else fails, Yu'thiol uses his last *invisibility* spell to make his escape. After he has ascertained his opponent's base of operations, he gathers allies to to attack with overwhelming force.

DEVELOPMENT

The PCs could meet Yu'thiol as he seeks allies to help him assault a thieves' guild and kill their leader. The leader of the guild saw Yu'thiol without a disguise, and now Yu'thiol poses as a frustrated member of the city watch looking for adventurous individuals willing to work "outside the boundaries of the law."

Alternatively, the PCs might encounter Yu'thiol in the stronghold of an enemy. Yu'thiol was sent to spy on the PCs' enemy and has taken the opportunity to evaluate the stronghold as a possible base of operations for a larger githyanki strike force. Ω

LUST

BY J. BRADLEY SCHELL

ARTWORK BY CHUCK LUKACS · CARTOGRAPHY BY KYLE HUNTER

† Magic Items Monsters NPCs Objects Settlements Traps

"Lust" is a D&D Side Trek for four characters of 4th level. It can be modified for characters of 2nd to 6th level with little trouble using information in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. Although this adventure is set in the world of Greyhawk, it can be placed on any well-traveled road that passes through a heavily forested area in your campaign setting.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

"Lust" is a chance traveling encounter. The PCs encounter Redwood Oakblossom, a half-fiend satyr, on a road at the edges of the Dim Forest on the borders of Bissel and the Gran March. He has *charmed* three aspiring Knights of the Watch and convinced them to try and kill each other for his own amusement. PCs charmed by the satyr join the battle; those who resist find the *charmed* attacking them.

BACKGROUND

Redwood Oakblossom blames his misdeeds on his bad upbringing. Born as a result of the brutal rape of his dryad mother by a loosened fiend, Redwood spent his childhood rejected by other fey children. Even his own mother can barely look at him without being reminded of his horrifying conception, for Redwood bears the marks of his fiendish father: He has glowing eyes, two small horns growing between his ram's horns, and he stands a foot taller than a pureblood satyr.

Because no one would play with him, the satyr spent much of his time alone, developing his skills with the panpipes by charming and soothing the small beasts of the forests. It was during this time alone in the dark places of the woodlands that he discovered a more sinister inheritance from his father—a deep and raging bloodlust. It didn't matter who spilled the blood, as long as it was hot and fresh. Many a squirrel suffered a long, bloody death at the hands of Redwood as he satisfied his fiendish impulses.

As Redwood grew, the sophistication of his bloodlust grew, as well. He found that his pipe playing could *charm* forest travelers on the nearby road, and that they could be convinced to slay the small forest beasts who innocently emerged to frolic to the music of the satyr's pipes. From there it was only a small leap of logic to the idea of forcing the travelers to attack other intelligent creatures, a task made easier if the *charmed* were convinced their own lives were in danger from their "foes."

At first, Redwood would *charm* those of natural opposition, such as goblins and patrolling soldiers, and then put them together to see what would occur. While the bloodletting between these two groups was enjoyable to the half-fiend, he found that his thirst wasn't quenched by this nearly as much as when two natural allies fought one another. What satisfied his fiendish nature even more was to then attack and slay the victors while they were still wounded from the fight, ripping them apart with his horns, claws, and teeth in a bloodthirsty orgy of rage.

As travelers become more wary of the sections of forest that Redwood frequented, his tactics grew sneakier, and his range wider. Now he doesn't hesitate to sneak up on a group of camped travelers, softly playing his pipes to *charm* the guards. These Redwood leads off into the forest, where they attack and sally forth against one another while he pipes a martial tune. In the morning, the other travelers wake up (assuming some other predator didn't devour them in their unguarded state) to find their guards missing, with almost no indication of what happened to them.

Glimpses of Redwood have inspired wild rumors among the regular travelers of these routes about the horned ghost and its lethal tunes; now guards are at a premium, and only large groups travel the forest. Grizzled rangers have been hired to track those who disappeared, but only the bloody sites where the victims died are found. Redwood is considered a scourge along the road that runs along the edge of the Dim Forest between Bissel and Gran March, terrifying patrols and travelers alike. The other forest creatures steer clear of Redwood and his activities for fear of reprisal from the dangerous half-breed, leaving this section of forest to him alone.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Although this adventure is designed as a chance roadside encounter, the success of Redwood Oakblossom can serve as the basis of an adventure larger in scope than presented here. Here are some hooks to consider:

• The PCs are hired as bounty hunters by The Wooden League, a local woodcutter's coalition, to rid the roadway of the dangerous creature that lurks in the forest.

• Bowing to local political pressure, the Ferocious Ancient Hippogriff, Captain Hewn Stonetow (Clr7 of St. Cuthbert), a Knight of the Watch, charges the party to stop the ghostly menace at the edge of the Dim Forest.

• The local satyrs and other fey creatures of the forest have begun to suffer the brutal attacks of Redwood. They have contacted Hawia Blushberry (Dru3) for help. She, in turn, appeals to the party to seek out and destroy this abomination of nature.

A FRIGHTFUL SIGHT! (EL 7)

Read or paraphrase the following once you're ready to begin the encounter:

The twilight of the day is upon the surrounding forest, and were it not for the smooth and steady roadway, the going would be difficult. The quiet of the evening is gradually broken by the quick tempo of a martial tune played on a flute that catches and then holds your attention form somewhere in the near vicinity. Following the sound to its source some 250 feet ahead reveals a strange sight: Three youthful-looking men in hauberks of chain and wielding longswords dance around a small clearing in the trees, slashing and hacking at each other in time with the beat. They are dressed in the surcoats of the local constabulary, although these are rent and slashed.

All the while, a brown, furry-legged humanoid creature with horns and hooves capers around the battle, blowing the whistling tune that first caught your ear on a set of elaborate pan pipes. The black handle of a heavy scimitar strapped to the creature's back protrudes above the ram horns growing on his head. Most horribly, a sickening, lustful grin is mirrored in the sparkle of the monster's glowing eyes with each successful thrust of the dancers' weapons.

Creatures: The three soldiers are aspiring Knights of the Watch. Hearing of the dangerous beast lurking in this area, they took it upon themselves to track down and defeat the monstrous presence plaguing the travelers of this road, thinking that success would catapult them up the ranks of Knighthood. Scioch and Ferrith Freeson are brothers born less than a year apart—they look and act more like twins, dressing alike, fighting with the same style, and so on.

The third, Wolly Greenshed, entered the Knights of the Watch at the same time as the Freesons, and is a fast and true friend of the brothers. Short where the Freesons are tall, dark where they are fair, clumsy where they are graceful, Wolly seems an unlikely companion. The brothers

admire his fierce heart and staunch loyalty, and consider him a boon companion.

Stalwart Vigil Ferrith Freeson, Male Human Ftr1: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 1d10+2; hp 15 (10 currently); Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, flat-footed 15, touch 11; Atk +4 melee (1d8+3/crit 19–20, longsword); AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Skills: Climb +0*, Listen +1, Ride +4, Spot +2. *Feats:* Weapon Focus (longsword), Dodge, Toughness.

*Includes –5 armor check penalty.

Possessions: chainmail, longsword, 22 gp, 12 sp.

Stalwart Vigil Scioch Freeson, Male Human Ftr1: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 1d10+2; hp 12 (8 currently); Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, flat-footed 15, touch 11; Atk +4 melee (1d8+3/crit 19–20, longsword); AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 14.

Skills: Jump +0*, Listen +1, Ride +4, Spot +2. *Feats:* Weapon Focus (longsword), Dodge, Power Attack.

*Includes –5 armor check penalty.

Possessions: chainmail, longsword, 17 gp, 35 sp.

Stalwart Vigil Wolly Greenshed, Male Human Ftr1: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 1d10+1; hp 11 (5 currently); Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15, flat-footed 15, touch 10; Atk +5 melee (1d8+4/crit 19–20, longsword); AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +2*, Jump +1*, Ride +3, Spot +2. *Feats:* Weapon Focus (Long sword), Endurance, Power Attack.

*Includes –5 armor check penalty.

Possessions: chainmail, longsword, 45 gp, 5 sp.

Redwood Oakblossom is a massive satyr, some 6 feet tall and weighing 250 pounds. His fur is a rich brown mottled with black, and his skin has a reddish hue. His pitch-black ram's horns curl about the sides of his head, ending in sharpened points near his glowing eyes. His teeth shine bright white and are sharply pointed, as are the talons at the ends of his fingers. Two small, bright-red horns spring from the center of his forehead between the ram's horns. He wears a fur belt made from deerskin, from which hangs his *bag of holding*. The bag holds gruesome trophies taken from the battles he has instigated.

Redwood Oakblossom, Male Half-fiend Satyr: CR 6; Medium-size Outsider (6 ft. tall) HD 5d6+12; hp 44; Init +3; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, flat-footed 15, touch 11; Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, gore), +5 melee (1d4+2, 2 claws), +5 melee (1d6+2, bite), or +8 melee (1d6+2/crit 18–20, masterwork scimitar), +5 melee (1d4+2, claw), and +5 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA pipes, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; immune to poison; acid, cold, electricity, fire resistance 20; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 22.

Skills: Bluff +14, Hide +15, Intimidate +13, Listen +15, Move Silently +15, Perform (dance, pan pipes) +18, Spot +15; *Feats:* Alertness, Dodge, Multiattack.

Pipes (Su): When Redwood plays his pipes, all creatures within a 60-foot spread (except satyrs) must succeed at a Will save (DC 19) or be affected by *charm person*, *sleep*, or *fear* (caster level 10th). Redwood chooses the tune and its effect. In hands other than those of a satyr, these pipes have no special powers. A creature that successfully saves against any of the pipe's effects cannot be affected by the same set of pipes again for one day.

Spell-like Abilities: 3/day—*darkness*; 1/day—*dese-*

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Lust" is designed to challenge four 4th-level characters, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

2nd- and 3rd-level PCs: The adventure as written is very difficult for characters of this level. To compensate, consider making the following changes:

• Remove Redwood's *cloak of Charisma +2,* and reduce his Charisma to 15 (thus reducing the save DC of his pipes to 15).

• Allow for the possibility of other Knights of the Watch to show up in the second or third round of combat if the PCs need help battling Redwood. Alternatively, Wolly could resist the *charm person* affect and assist uncharmed PCs against Redwood.

5th- and 6th-level PCs: The adventure as written still provides a challenge to characters of this level, although it's not nearly as great. Consider making the following adjustments:

• Give Redwood two levels of sorcerer and two *potions of invisibility*.

• Alternatively, add more *charmed* knights to the mix who are willing to fight and die for the satyr.

Scaling the adventure up from here is simply a matter of adding more levels to Redwood (fighter, barbarian, sorcerer, or both are all good choices). At very high levels, however, consider allowing a powerful Redwood to beseech his father, a hezrou tanar'ri, for aid. The half-fiend satyr and a hezrou demon would provide an excellent challenge for high-level characters.

Finally, remember that changing the Encounter Levels should raise the amount of treasure in the adventure. Consult page 170 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (Tables **7-2**, **7-3**, and **7-4**) to determine treasure appropriate to the new encounters.

crate, unholy blight. Caster level 5th; save DC = 16 + spell level.

Possessions: bag of holding (250-pound weight limit), *cloak of Charisma* +2, masterwork scimitar, pan flute.

Tactics: When a PC comes within 60 feet of the piping satyr, she must make a Will save (DC 19), or be affected by the pipe's *charm person* ability. The next round, the *charmed* PC and Redwood must make opposed Charisma checks—Redwood's is made at +6. If the PC fails that check, Redwood commands her to attack uncharmed PCs within 60 feet of the satyr. A PC who wins the opposed Charisma check isn't forced to attack, but she is still under the effect of the *charm person* spell.

The round after Redwood attempts to make the *charmed* PCs attack, he turns the soldiers (who continue to fight among themselves) on those PCs who resisted his pipes. These soldiers, completely lost to Redwood's magic, attack with reckless abandon, but they never travel beyond 60 feet from the satyr. They move with the satyr if he moves so as to stay within that 60-foot radius.

PCs who attempt to sneak up on the satyr must make opposed Hide and Move Silently checks against Redwood's powerful Listen and Spot checks. Redwood moves within 60 feet of any he detects, placing them within range of his *charm person* spell or the attacks of the capering knights.

If possible, Redwood stays out of melee while others who can fight for him still stand. If the PCs defeat the three knights (and any others *charmed*), Redwood immediately attacks. In direct combat, Redwood first uses his *darkness* to confuse the battlefield, *unholy blight* to soften up his foes, then follows up with his mundane weapons. If the battle begins to go against him, the satyr uses *darkness* and his superior speed to flee and hide in the forest.

Development: If the PCs allow the fighters to continue their battle to its horrible conclusion, Ferrith wins a heartbreaking victory. He is then set upon and quickly slain by the ripping claws of the half-fiend. Should the PCs manage to break the *charm person* spell influencing the knights, they immediately attack Redwood.

CONCLUSION

The knights are in serious trouble for abandoning their normal duties and are drummed out of the Knights of Watch unless they return with the head of Redwood. The aspiring knights beg the party to allow them to take credit for the kill, explaining their situation. There is a 500 gp reward for the satyr, which the Knights turn over to the party if they are allowed to take credit for slaying the menace.

Ad-hoc XP award: If the PCs agree to allow the knights to claim the kill as their own, award them an additional 10% experience for this encounter.

If Redwood escapes, he flees deep within the Dim Forest. His evil is stopped for the moment, but his fiendish nature will not be denied. Redwood could return to haunting the roadways of the Dim Forest within the year, he might relocate to another area, or he might decide to stalk the PCs—those who stopped his lovely fun.

Putting an end to Redwood's bloodthirsty rein of terror need not end the opportunities for adventure in the Dim Forest. The other satyrs and dryads of the forest return to the roadway, instigating a number of debaucherous encounters with travelers using the trade road, becoming almost as much of a menace as Redwood. Fooled into thinking that Bissel and Gran March were engaging in guerrilla warfare against the humanoids of the Dim Forest by the remnants of Redwood's bloodletting sessions, goblin forces surge out to attack the outlying areas of Bissel. Finally, Redwood's father, a hezrou tanar'ri who has been following Redwood's growth and career from afar with pride, takes exception to the satyr's defeat. At the first opportunity, this powerful demon comes seeking revenge. Ω

Brad's lusts tend to run towards the more ordinary: A cool breeze on a hot summer's day, a cold beer most anytime, the sweat on the . . . To let him know what you thought about this adventure, write to ***btsschellhouse@yahoo.com****.*

CRITICAL THREATS

BY MIKE MEARLS
ARTWORK BY BEN HENRY

Keershaz, Male Imp Wiz4: CR 6; Tiny Outsider (Evil, Lawful) (2 ft. tall); HD 3d8 plus 4d4; hp 25; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15; Atk +10 melee (1d4 and poison, stinger); SA at will—*detect good, detect magic,* and *invisibility;* 1/day—*suggestion,* poison, spells; SQ DR 5/silver, SR 5, poison immunity, fire resistance 20, see in darkness, polymorph (kobold, spider), regeneration 2; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +7, Hide +18, Listen +5, Move Silently +8, Search +9, Spellcraft +14, Spot +5. *Feats:* Dodge, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (Enchantment), Weapon Finesse (sting).

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*animate rope, charm person, expeditious retreat, grease, mage armor, magic missile, Nystul's magic aura, summon monster I, shield, sleep, unseen servant, ventriloquism;* 2nd—*arcane lock, darkness, flaming sphere, Melf's acid arrow, summon monster II, Tasha's hideous laughter.*

Possessions: wand of summon monster I (38 charges), *boots of elvenkind,* scroll of *arcane lock,* scroll of *darkness,* scroll of *expeditious retreat,* scroll of *mage armor,* scroll of *Melf's acid arrow,* spellbook.

KEERSHAZ

Centuries ago, Keershaz was a great devil lord. Engrossed in his schemes, Keershaz grew blind to the threat posed to him by his underlings. In a great battle against Thoolvaz, his most bitter enemy, Keershaz's lieutenants turned against him, fleeing the battle to seize Keershaz's stronghold. Abandoned on the field, the devil lord was quickly captured. Instead of slaying his foe, Thoolvaz decided to strip Keershaz of his power and turn him into a puny imp. Luckily for the defeated devil, his one-time followers launched an attack on Thoolvaz's palace to seize their former master and destroy him. In the tumult, Keershaz escaped, fleeing eventually to the Prime Material Plane.

Enraged at his puny form and reduced power, Keershaz now plots to restore his former glory. The uppermost echelons of the baatezu order, entertained to no end by their underlings' fumbling machinations, have offered Keershaz a bargain: If he causes the death of 100 good-aligned heroes, they will restore him to his former power. As a result, Keershaz has declared a one-devil war against adventurers.

APPEARANCE

Keershaz is a 2-foot tall, wiry, red-skinned humanoid with leathery bat wings, two tiny horns in his forehead, and a long, undulating tail. His voice is high-pitched and rather whiny, which contrasts with his bombastic, arrogant tone. While Keershaz is now an imp, he still carries himself as a fearsome pit fiend.

TACTICS

With his tiny new body and reduced spellcasting ability, Keershaz is quite aware about his capabilities. He lurks in dungeons, crypts, and ruins, hoping to pick off adventurers with the unwitting aid of the monsters who dwell there. Using *invisibility* and his Hide skill, he lurks out of sight near dungeon entrances. When adventurers approach he follows them, hoping to find an opportunity to finish one off. He casts *dancing lights, ghost sound,* and *ventriloquism* to lure adventurers into traps and other hazards. When the heroes encounter monsters, he uses *summon monster* to flank them and attack spellcasters, or wreaks havoc with their plans via his silent *daze* spells.

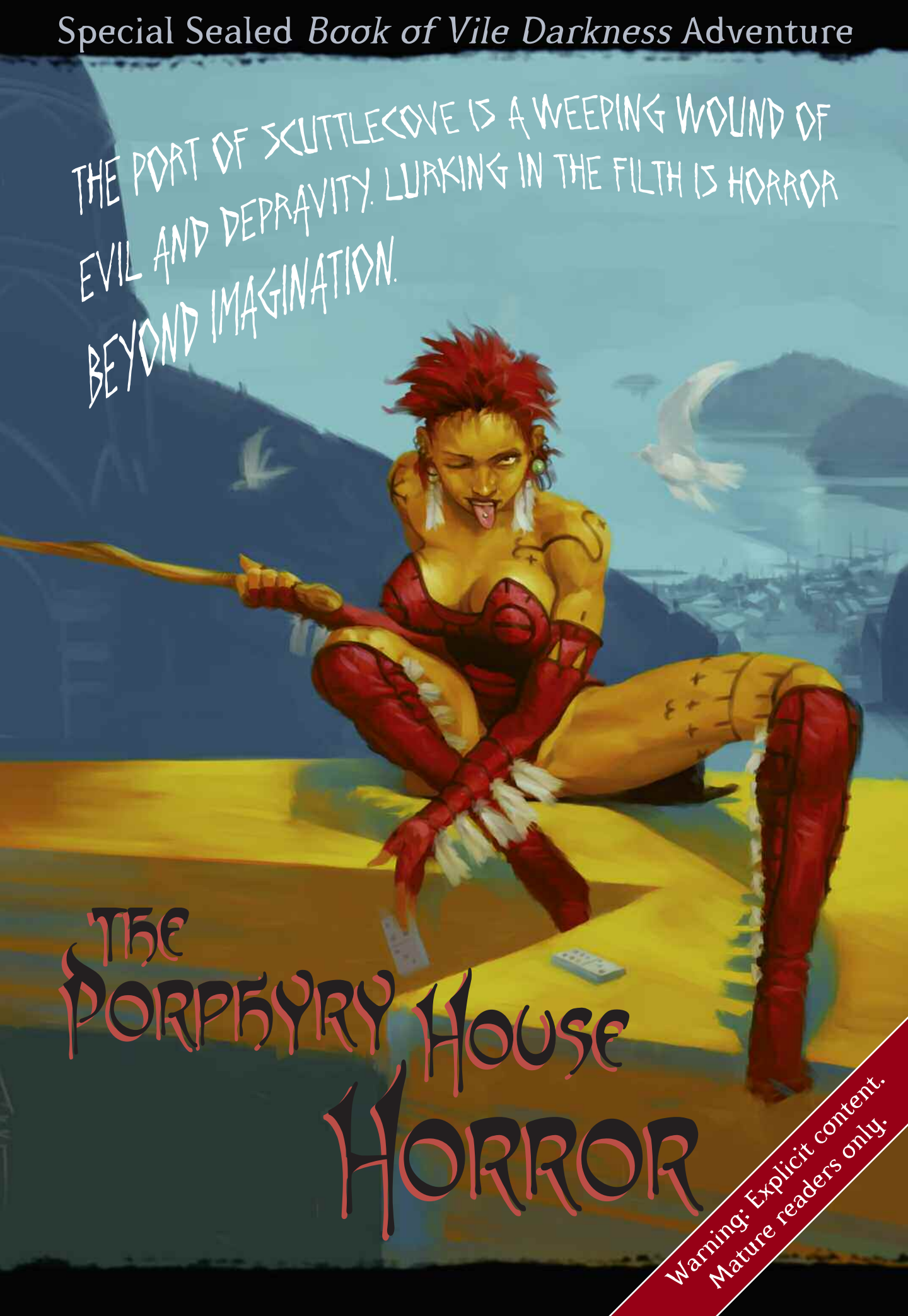
Keershaz is terrified of defeat. He knows that should he die as an imp, he faces centuries of service as a lowly lemure. Thus, if directly confronted he uses his scroll of *expeditious retreat* to flee. If pressed into battle or if he sees the opportunity to destroy a weakened party, he uses *darkness* to cloak his attack before sending a *flaming sphere* hurtling at an enemy. Keershaz never moves into melee, and attacks with his stinger only if cornered.

DEVELOPMENT

Keershaz prefers to lurk in a dungeon or ruin until the monsters within it are defeated before moving on to his next site. While never appearing physically to monsters, he offers them advice on defeating adventurers while invisible or via *ventriloquism.*

Unfortunately for Keershaz, a host of devils seeks him. Thoolvaz wants to re-capture him, while his old followers want him dead. The PCs might find themselves bargaining with imps or osyluths dispatched to kill or capture Keershaz, or negotiating with the imp to avoid or slay his hunters. Ω

Special Sealed *Book of Vile Darkness* Adventure



The Porphyry House Horror

Warning: Explicit content.
Mature readers only.

THE PORPHYRY HOUSE HORROR

BY JAMES JACOBS

ARTWORK BY BEET, JONATHAN WAYSHAK & LEE BALLARD

CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

Magic Items Monsters NPCs Objects Settlements Traps

"The Porphyry House Horror" is a D&D adventure designed for a group of four 10th-level adventurers using the rules and concepts presented in the *Book of Vile Darkness*. The *Book of Vile Darkness* is immensely helpful in running this adventure and dealing with the situations the party encounters in the Porphyry House and its wretched environs.

This adventure confronts the players with some truly depraved and remorselessly evil villains and situations. Bards, rogues, and similar characters should feel right at home in this environment, and their skills should certainly make some parts of the adventure easier to cope with. Characters like paladins and clerics who have a strong moral compass should prove helpful against the numerous evil and corrupt creatures encountered in this adventure. However, they might end up causing more problems than they expect when it becomes clear that in order to succeed, the party might need to make allies of some of their foes.

PREPARATION

The only three books you actually need to run the adventure are the three core rulebooks. Feats, items, and monsters taken from the *Book of Vile Darkness* are reprinted in the adventure for your convenience. Spells have not been reprinted, but you can easily substitute spells of the appropriate levels for any vile spells in NPC stat blocks (all such spells are called out).

Also, make sure to study the yuan-ti entry in the *Monster Manual* before running the adventure. Yuan-ti are complex creatures, and even the weakest have a large number of spell-like abilities and psionic powers they can use. Of special note is the fact that there are plenty of potted plants scattered throughout the upper floors of Porphyry House, allowing the yuan-ti to use their *entangle* ability with ease. Although no monsters "wander" the House per se, regular patrols of Porphyry House guards can cause the party all sorts of trouble.

BACKGROUND

Scuttlecove was founded by a small group of three cannibalistic blasphemers who learned how to steal divine power from the gods they despise and loathe. Known as ur-priests, these three cultists possessed a shrewd and ruthless business sense, and over only a few years managed to build Scuttlecove into a thriving, if lawless and dangerous, city.

Scuttlecove is legendary among pirates as a place where any desire can be bought, any urge fulfilled, and any whim acted upon without fear of repercussion apart from the immediate. In other words, "If you can get away with it, do it!" Drug dealers, slave traders, and other terrible merchants flocked to the city to make their fortunes, or they died trying. Roving bands of homeless pirates, uninspired thugs, and even the odd assassin found the place a perfect home; its distance from the mainland kept it free of the meddling attentions of the more civilized nations. Left to its own devices and under the semi-watchful rule of the ur-priest triad, Scuttlecove could have eventually grown large enough to actually pose a military threat to the mainland. Unfortunately, something is growing in the stinking underbelly of Scuttlecove that could prove far more dangerous and terrible to the surrounding regions.

Several years ago, a small cult of Demogorgon worshiping yuan-ti cultists arrived, led by a charismatic and crafty yuan-ti bard named Wulvera. They brought with them large amounts of cash and loot, and with it they financed the construction of a grand structure on the edge of one of Scuttlecove's marketplaces. Using porphyry mined locally, the yuan-ti cultists built a huge and beautiful building that put to shame the ramshackle structures it surrounded. The place was a bordello, the classiest and most exotic of its kind in the entire city. In a place as steeped in lust and sin as Scuttlecove, the Porphyry House was an overnight success. Over the next several months, the other whorehouses and festhalls in Scuttlecove went out of business one at a time. It

became blatantly obvious that the owners of the other businesses were being forced out by the owners of Porphyry House, but the citizens of Scuttlecove paid this no heed. Such actions are common in Scuttlecove. In any case, no sooner than three months after it opened, the Porphyry House was the only bordello in all of Scuttlecove, and business was booming . . . which was just as Wulvera and her yuan-ti minions planned.

Wulvera is a Thrall of Demogorgon, one of the demon prince's most favored minions. She hopes to one day curry enough favor from the Prince of Demons to be transformed into an immortal demon herself, and Porphyry House is the tool for these ambitions. She selected Scuttlecove as a base of operations because the actions of her cultist minions would not draw undue attention from any lawful or good authorities or organizations. Her followers could more or less do as they pleased. The one kink in her plan is the fact that the place is ruled by a triad of ur-priests. Wulvera understands that Demogorgon is not a true god per se, but her cult is religious enough in its devotion that the ur-priests would doubtless lash out at it if they knew of it. Thus, she decided to use Porphyry House as a cover. Not only would such a structure help finance her goals, but it would distract the ur-priests from its true nature.

Originally, Wulvera staffed the bordello with prostitutes, but they quickly proved to be too independent and demanding for their own salaries. Next, she tried kidnapped victims and slaves. Although these new "employees" had the advantage of no wages, they proved to be too subversive and uncooperative. Never mind the fact that there were several embarrassing moments when the powerful friends and families of a few kidnap victims showed up well armed and demanded the return of their kin.

Finally, Wulvera had an epiphany: She and her yuan-ti minions could make use of their natural ability to *polymorph other* on common animals and beasts. Transformed into humanoids, they made quiet and amiable employees. Their natural docility and minimal sense of self worth kept them in their place more surely than a locked door could ever hope to; the main disadvantage was that *polymorphed* animals and beasts tended to be ineffective as brothel "entertainers" since they lacked a strong force of personality or sense of self. They were uncreative, uncommunicative, and more often than not, just plain unattractive. While the majority of the House's clientele didn't seem to mind, the more discerning customers began to complain.

As a result, Wulvera looked farther afield, taking advantage of a nearby island with a large population of gulguthydras. The cult believed these creatures to be some of Demogorgon's chosen—with their scaly skin and multiple heads, the beasts were thought to embody some of the demon lord's "better" qualities. Combined with a healthy personal presence (and the added bonus that in a pinch the *polymorph* effect could be dropped for an instant gulguthydra garrison), Wulvera thought they'd make perfect "employees." Harpies also made fairly successful subjects,

but for the most part, they weren't pliable enough mentally and required more time-consuming training. Captured, *polymorphed*, and properly trained, the gulguthydras quickly grew to be one of the Porphyry House's prime attractions.

For a few years after the Porphyry House opened, Wulvera spent much of her time researching how best to please Demogorgon and earn her descent into demonic power. Eventually, she came to the conclusion that the best method to earn the gratitude and favor of the Prince of Demons would be to offer him a sacrifice on a scale unlike any he has seen before. Her idea came not long after she accidentally created a powerful magic drug that temporarily transforms those who breathe its fumes into half-fiends. She has named this new drug "demon's breath."

She now plans on sacrificing a number of willing (if duped) individuals during a massive orgy held at the Porphyry House. With the divine energy gained by this sacrifice, she hopes to infuse her supplies of this new drug with otherworldly power, blanketing Scuttlecove with a cloud of the stuff so that the entire city's population transforms into fiends permanently, including herself. Of course, she hopes to redirect a fair portion of the energy into her own soul, granting her the greatest share of the demonic energy as well as the ability to command its new demonic citizens as her puppets.

Wulvera has nearly completed her preparations and has started to spread invitations to this private orgy among her best customers. She set the date for the event at sometime in the near future, and if these plans are not stopped, the city of Scuttlecove will become more dangerous than ever before. Unfortunately, her actions have attracted unwanted attention. Although she has managed to keep the truth of her intentions from the ur-priest rulers of Scuttlecove, she has not been so successful at hiding her plans from two others. The first of these serves one of Demogorgon's greatest rivals, the Dark Prince Graz'zt. A powerful Thrall of Graz'zt, Tyralandi has started her own investigations into the rumors of Demogorgon cult activity, and she hopes to bring the cult down. The second is a local wizard and druglord named Kedward Bone, who has recently learned of the existence of Wulvera's new drug; he'll stop at nothing to have it for his own purposes.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The party travels to the festering city of Scuttlecove, and not long after are contacted by Kedward Bone. The druglord wishes to use their skills to secure a sample of a strange and powerful new drug he believes is being manufactured in a local brothel. Not long after, they are contacted by a beautiful but deadly half-fiend who would also like to enlist their aid against the brothel.

The party infiltrates Porphyry House and soon learns the truth behind the curtain. Enraged that her plans seem to be falling apart, Wulvera gathers her closest minions to her in the temple of Demogorgon below Porphyry House. She then hatches a desperate plan—to capture and sacrifice the party to Demogorgon instead of pursuing the sacrificial orgy. The party must avoid her traps and attacks long enough to penetrate to the core of her temple within the bordello and stop her vile plans.

GETTING STARTED

This adventure truly begins when the party arrives at Scuttlecove. They might need to seek some sort of obscure but vital bit of information known by one of Scuttlecove's inhabitants; perhaps this information is held only by the Skindancers. If the party consists of characters with a shady background and low moral standards, you could even tempt them to Scuttlecove with stories of how anyone can do anything they want there, as long as they're prepared to defend themselves against any repercussions. Such characters might even be drawn to the city by rumors of a magnificent brothel in which your wildest fantasies can be made flesh.

Alternatively, you can stage an encounter like the one that follows. This particular encounter works only on a coastal region. The party members might have heard rumors that piracy is increasing off the coast for some time. Eventually, they should hear a new rumor . . . that a particularly vicious and deadly monster has started to attack travelers along a well-used coastal road. One entire village is rumored to have been eaten by this creature. The party might decide to investigate these rumors on their own, they might be hired by a local noble or aristocrat to put a stop to the attacks, or they might simply have this encounter while traveling along a suitable road in your campaign.

SHIPWRECKED GULGUTHYDRA (EL 12)

The attacks are being caused by a traumatized gulguthydra that was captured and *polymorphed* into a human woman and forced to serve in the Porphyry House. The gulguthydra, smarter than most of its kin, managed to escape from the Porphyry House by stowing away on a pirate ship called *The Siren's Teat*. Eventually discovered when it snuck up from the hold to look for food, the foul pirate crew took turns raping the creature before the ship's wizard noticed the strange magical aura around her. Curious, he shooed off the lusty pirates and attempted to *dispel* the magic aura simply to see what would happen. Unfortunately for him, he succeeded. The enraged gulguthydra made quick work of the wizard, the captain, and his crew.

For several days the ship drifted, until it finally crashed on the shore of the mainland. The near-starving gulguthydra quickly established itself at the top of the local food chain, eating an entire village and anyone it happened to run across in its wanderings. Each night, the beast returns to the shipwreck, which it has fashioned into a new lair.

The party should have little trouble finding evidence of the gulguthydra's tracks in the surrounding terrain once they become alerted to its presence. Finding and tracking the creature requires a Search or Wilderness Lore check (DC 9).

The creature's lair is in a small, crescent-shaped cove bordered on the north and south by cliffs. The landward side of the cove is densely forested, although a road passes nearby. In several places the gulguthydra's bulk has crushed trees, making it fairly obvious that a massive beast lairs nearby. The wrecked hull of *The Siren's Teat* lies impaled upon some sharp rocks about 50 feet from shore, but at low tide the ship sits completely exposed. The hull of the ship is blasted outward and seethes with a horrible, eye-watering reek. Within the hull lurks the creature.

Creature: The gulguthydra should be present in its lair when the party arrives. Allow it Listen and Spot checks to notice the PCs' approach; once it's aware of them it lies in wait and attacks as soon as they come within reach. The beast has fostered a deep hatred and fear of humans and has no desire to be captured again. It fights to the death.

The gulguthydra's full statistics can be found on pages 58–59 of *Monstrous Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn*, but the relevant portions are reprinted here. Present the gulguthydra as a truly alien creature, the likes of which the party might never have heard of. A gulguthydra is a horrid hybrid of the predatory hydra and the scavenging otyugh. It has six snakelike heads on long serpentine necks, a pair of otyughlike tentacles, and a squat reptilian body covered with foul slime and excrement. While most gulguthydra have an Intelligence score of 6, this one is unusually intelligent for the species.

Gulguthydra: CR 12; Huge Aberration; HD 15d8+105; hp 172; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., swim 30 ft. (surface only); AC 23, touch 8, flat-footed 23; Atk +14 melee (1d6+5, 2 tentacles), +12 melee (2d8+2, 6 bites); SA improved grab; SQ nauseating stench; AL N; SV Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +10; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 24, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 15.

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +8 *Feats:* Iron Will, Multiattack.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the gulguthydra must hit with a tentacle attack.

Nauseating Stench (Ex): Any corporeal being with 8 or fewer HD who comes within 80 feet of the gulguthydra must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 23) or be nauseated for the next 1d10 rounds. At the end of this period, if still within 80 feet of the gulguthydra, the being must make another save. A single successful save exempts the being from needing to make saves against any gulguthydra's nauseating stench ability for one day.

Treasure: The gear carried by the one-time crew of the ship has been lost, but most of the ship's booty remains in the hold or lies scattered in the shallow tide pools below. This loot consists of 50,000 cp, 20,000 sp, 400 gp, 10 pp, seven tourmalines (100 gp each), assorted pieces of jewelry worth a total of 1,200 gp, a *+1 longsword*, and a *wand of cure moderate wounds* (26 charges). The wand has fallen into a deep tide pool and can be found only with a successful Search check (DC 25).

Also in the hold is a small wooden coffer with a padded interior. Inside are three vials of red liquid. A successful Alchemy check (DC 25) reveals that the fluid is spiderlily plant extract, a fluid valued as a catalyst for experimental drugs that incorporate the essence of evil outsiders.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Porphyry House Horror" is designed for four 10th-level PCs. If your particular party consists of characters of lower or higher level, you need to alter most of the encounters as well. The easiest way to lower or raise the difficulty of an encounter is to adjust the character level of the opponents. If your group consists of lower-level characters, simply lower the class levels of the enemies in this adventure by the same number (to a minimum of one). If lowering levels, make sure you don't lower them to the point that the character loses a key ability needed to function in the adventure.

Raising class levels to match characters who are higher than 10th level is a simpler process. You can even raise the encounter level of non-classed encounters an appropriate amount by giving the creatures class levels or advancing them using the guidelines in the *Monster Manual*. Wilarue the corpse succubus, for example, could gain sorcerer levels.

As a whole, this adventure is more deadly than most. This is offset somewhat by the fact that the party can ally with Tyralandi, an evil half-fiend/half-nymph. Tyralandi is a powerful character, and her presence can certainly help a party. If your party is lower level, consider having Tyralandi join their group sooner, and perhaps be a bit more helpful or less evil in her actions. If your party is higher level, you might wish to have Tyralandi be more disruptive to the party. A high-level party might not even need her aid, in which case you're better off removing her from the adventure entirely, or perhaps using her as an additional villain.

For a lower-level party, you might consider making the following changes:

- Replace the gulguthydras with fiendish harpies.
- Replace the stone golems with huge animated objects.
- Remove the fiendish or half-dragon template from the huge viper in the treasury.
- Remove the retriever altogether.
- Have the Temple of Demogorgon's floor consist of stinking earth, eliminating the snakes and Balance checks.

For a higher level party, you might consider making the following changes:

- Make the gulguthydras all half-dragon gulguthydras or advance them 3–6 HD.
- Replace some or all of the animated porphyry statues with flesh golems or stone golems.
- Replace the *glyphs of warding* with *symbols*.
- Add a second or third retriever to the temple.
- Add more numerous or powerful demons to the dungeon.

In addition to the monetary treasure, two other items of interest can be found in the captain's cabin:

• The ship's sea charts lie in a crumpled heap on the floor of the cabin. A successful Profession (sailor) check (DC 15) reveals the location of Scuttlecove. PCs unable to make this skill check can find someone in a nearby town capable of deciphering the charts easily enough.

• With a successful Search check (DC 20) made while searching the captain's cabin, the ship's log is found. This water stained and badly damaged journal is difficult to read, and requires a successful Decipher Script check (DC 27) to sort out. The party might need to take it to a specialist to have it deciphered if they can't make heads or tails of it. If its contents can be understood, the reader learns that the captain has long used Scuttlecove as a safe port to stage pirate raids.

Two entries in the journal prove particularly interesting. The first occurs near the end and tells how the captain agreed to travel to a major city on the mainland, posing as a merchant so he could pick up a delivery from an unnamed alchemist. He doesn't quite know what the delivery is, but the entry does mention that it's a personal favor for the matron of Porphyry House, and that if he delivers it to her on time he's to be rewarded with a "week of freebies."

The second interesting entry is the final one in the book; it details the discovery of a beautiful stowaway in the hold of the vessel. The captain gloats a bit about having had his way with the poor lass before he tossed her to his crew for fun, and mentions that she looked familiar . . . "Perhaps she was one of the girls from Porphyry House?"

SCUTTLECOVE

You should place the city of Scuttlecove on the coast of a tropical island at least one hundred miles from shore. Alternatively, you could place it on the mainland, as long as it's secluded and distant enough from civilization that it can operate without interference.

The only ships that regularly sail to and from the port of Scuttlecove are pirate ships, and they are far from likely to take passengers except as prisoners. No other ship willingly transports characters anywhere near Scuttlecove without immense bribes (10,000 gp paid in advance might do it) or truly impressive Diplomacy or Intimidate checks (DC 30). Since it is so far from the nearest major landmass, short term solutions like *water walk* probably won't suffice. Flight could get the party to the city fairly quickly, either on flying mounts or via magic. *Teleportation* is another possible route, although chances are that no one in the party has been to Scuttlecove before and no one they can hire would want to go there without being paid ten times the going rate.

To say that the small city of Scuttlecove is a ruptured boil on an otyugh's ass would be insulting otyughs everywhere. On its best days, a commoner wandering the streets of Scuttlecove during the day would be lucky to make it an hour without being assaulted. Now, with the withdrawal of the ur-priests, any semblance of order has nearly vanished, and things aren't quite that serene.

♛ **Scuttlecove (Small City):** Nonstandard; AL NE; 15,000 gp limit; Assets 8,970,000 gp; Population 11,960; Mixed (77% human, 3% Halfling, 2% elf, 2% dwarf, 3% gnome, 5% half-elf, 6% half-orc, 1 % tiefling, 1% other).

Authority Figures: The Ur-Triad (aristocrat 12/ur-priest 8).

Important Characters: Eralakni, female half-orc Exp8, owner of Eralakni's Emporium; Kedward Bone, male human Ftr1/Wiz6/Diabolist5; Lars Landicaster, male human Rgr8, owner of The Rusty Shunt; Beryoil Whistlecut, female halfling Brd11, leader of the Skindancers; Rhemus Caldakar, male gnome Nec10, owner of Parts is Parts; Tolun Kiel, male human Ftr7, owner of The Violated Ogre; Tyralandi, female half-fiend/nymph Rgr1/Thrall of Graz'zt4; Wulvera, Owner of Porphyry House, female halfblood yuan-ti Brd2/Thrall of Demogorgon7.

Scuttlecove is unlike most cities in that the vast majority of its inhabitants are warriors rather than commoners. The primary exports of the city are drugs and stolen properties (particularly art objects, gems, and magic items). The city's economy is anything but stable, driven mostly by the arrival of pirate ships laden with loot, and pirates all too eager to spend it. As a result, the majority of the city's buildings tend to be dilapidated, since their owners do not have the regular income necessary to keep the properties in good repair.

In theory, Scuttlecove is ruled by its founders, a trio of godless aristocrats who discovered a method to manipulate divine magic without having to resort to fawning over a god. These three ur-priests are known only as the Holy Triad, a self-mocking title perpetuated by the ur-priests themselves as a sick joke. They keep the details of their names and personal lives a closely guarded secret, and rarely, if ever, venture out of their walled compound in the north end of the city these days. What goes on inside that walled compound is the subject of many rampant rumors; the one thing these rumors seem to be able to agree on is that the Holy Triad are cannibals and have discovered a way to increase their own power and strength by consuming the flesh of their kin.

The Holy Triad imposes no laws save one: open worship of the gods is a crime punishable by public execution. As a result, no organized, public temples stand in Scuttlecove. Magical healing is provided by an association of bards known as the Skindancers. The Holy Triad doesn't interact with the citizens of Scuttlecove; they allow the citizens to live their lives as they see fit. A small percentage of the taxes they extract are returned to the city in the form of an arena, a massive public execution square, and upkeep on the docks—just enough to keep their citizens loyal.

Physically, Scuttlecove is a diseased, filthy pit of salty depression. The streets are often muddy and choked with

rubble. Here and there, the odd corpse yet to be claimed by a starving pirate for soup base bakes in the sun. The buildings are almost all one-story wooden affairs, with rickety walls, sagging roofs, and doorways consisting of strips of dried seaweed or cheap burlap. Those few buildings that can be construed as permanent are always the homes of powerful individuals.

After the citizenry itself, fire and disease are the greatest terrors known to the citizens of Scuttlecove. A fire is more or less the only thing that can rally the low lives of the city into anything resembling teamwork, since the buildings are so closely packed that an uncontrolled fire could do incredible damage. Disease is another matter; fully half the citizens of Scuttlecove are afflicted with some sort of contagious disease—a natural result of cramming so many people together in a small place with no one capable of keeping outbreaks in check. The Skindancers charge exorbitant prices to remove diseases, so only the most prosperous can afford to stay well.

VISITORS TO SCUTTLECOVE

A visitor to this foul city must make a Fortitude saving throw every day to avoid contracting a disease. The most common disease in Scuttlecove is filth fever, which is spread through flea bites. Other diseases might afflict party members, including cackle fever, mindfire, red ache, and the shakes. Additional diseases presented in the *Book of Vile Darkness* (in particular festering anger, misery's passage, and vile rigidity) also pop up from time to time.

In addition, each visitor to Scuttlecove needs to make an Intimidate check (DC 15) daily to avoid attracting unwanted attention. Failure indicates the party is marked by a number of thugs equal to 2 + the number of failed Intimidate checks in the group. These thugs stalk the victims, striking when the advantage presents itself. Use the following stats to represent the standard Scuttlecove thug who might be brave enough to attack visitors of the party's obvious skill.

Scuttlecove Thug, Human Ftr1/Rog5: CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d10+2 plus 5d6+10; hp 38; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Atk +8 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20, masterwork longsword) or +8 ranged (1d8+2/crit ×3, masterwork mighty composite longbow [+2 Str] with masterwork arrows); SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +5, Climb +11, Gather Information +5, Hide +7, Intimidate +5, Jump +11, Move Silently +7, Profession (sailor) +4, Swim +21, Use Rope +7. *Feats:* Great Fortitude, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: +1 studded leather armor, +1 buckler, +1 longsword, masterwork mighty longbow [+2 Str] with 20 masterwork arrows.

GATHERING INFORMATION IN SCUTTLECOVE

Upon arriving in Scuttlecove, the party likely tries to learn all they can via Gather Information checks. The following table provides a guideline to the types of information that can be discovered with Gather Information checks; each target DC lists three different pieces of information that might or might not assist the party. Each Gather Information check represents the results of approximately 4 hours of work.

Check Result	Information Learned
DC 10	• Scuttlecove is ruled by cannibal priests called the Holy Trinity. • The monks of Dire Hunger have retreated into their monastery.
DC 15	• The Violated Ogre is the best place to get drunk in town. • The rulers of the city are not really priests, but something worse.
DC 20	•The rulers of the city have not been seen in several weeks. • Porphyry House is gearing up for a big, invitation-only orgy soon.
DC 25	• The drug trade in town is controlled by a wizard named Kedward Bone. • The rulers of the city are divine spellcasters who despise the gods.
DC 30	• The Rusty Shunt is the safest place in town for visitors to stay. • A mysterious, beautiful, raven--winged woman has been seen in town.
DC 35+	• The Skindancers perform black market sexual favors. • The mysterious raven-winged woman is named Tyralandi. • A strange new drug is being brewed by someone in Porphyry House.

SCUTTLECOVE ENCOUNTER KEY

The following encounter areas in the city of Scuttlecove are only briefly described. The focus of this adventure is, after all, Porphyry House and the horrors it hides.

1. SCUTTLECOVE DOCKS

These docks represent the lifeblood of the city; without regular arrivals of pirate ships filled with booty, the entire city would quickly collapse on itself and wither away. The Holy Triad understands this and keeps the docks in fairly good condition. It allows any pirate ship to dock for free, as long as there is open space. The docks are clogged with ships, with additional ships moored further out in the harbor.

The waters of the cove itself are quite treacherous and filled with numerous jagged reefs. In fact, the city earned its name due to the large number of scuttled ships that still rot in the cove. These ships have been left to provide cover against any large invasion; a single ship can pass through the maze of wrecks and reefs with relative ease if it has the proper charts, but a large fleet would never make it in time to pose a threat to the city.

2. THE WATERFRONT

The Scuttlecove waterfront is the place to go if you're looking for something that can't be bought in more civilized areas. Slaves, stolen merchandise and magic, poisons, and rare magical components can all be found here, subject to Scuttlecove's 15,000-gp ceiling. The most popular ware in the waterfront has always been drugs, though; fully a third of the merchants in the region are drug pushers, and all of them who want to survive more than a week send 50% of their profits to Kedward Bone.

One curious note is the complete absence of anything resembling prostitutes in the region. This is due simply to the fact that Wulvera's actions have discouraged any public prostitution that isn't sanctioned by Porphyry House. Don't point this out to the party, since it's a fairly major clue, but if they ask on their own don't hide the clue from such a perceptive characters.

3. CITY WALLS

The city walls surrounding Scuttlecove were erected by the Holy Triad ages ago, and they haven't been kept in good repair. Built of logs harvested from the surrounding jungle, the wooden wall averages 20 feet high. The wall is rotting and in several places has collapsed entirely, but the citizens of Scuttlecove have little worry for their degrading walls.

4. THE SLUMS

A more depressing place would be hard to find. The slums of Scuttlecove consist of a tangled mess of temporary buildings made of wood, straw, mud, and even excrement or garbage, all heaped against the eastern wall on the far side of the Noyaro River. The river itself is fairly deep—nearly 30 feet in places—and as such it provides an excellent natural barrier to separate the lowest of the low. The vagabonds, rogues, and hopeless who live here are mostly harmless and spend much of their time hiding in their crude homes. This is where pirates go to die when they can't afford to be killed in a barroom brawl.

5. THE VIOLATED OGRE

This large, two-story building is made of blocks of stone and painted red. The Violated Ogre is a fairly large tavern and inn that caters mostly to visiting adventurers. The place gets its name from its most popular form of entertainment: a wretched ogre mage long ago rendered helpless by a *robe of powerlessness*. The ogre mage is mounted on display on a small stage in the center of the main room, and guests are welcome to practice whatever demented surgery they wish upon it. The ogre mage's regeneration keeps it from dying; it's been an attraction here for nearly ten years and has long since been driven hopelessly insane by its ordeal. The creature is now a raving masochist that takes disturbing pleasure in the ministrations of the tavern's drunken amateur surgeons.

The tavern is owned and run by a retired adventurer by the name of Tolun Kiel (male human Ftr7).

6. SCUTTLECOVE ARENA

One of the few structures in Scuttlecove constructed and maintained by the Holy Triad, this modest open air arena is a popular diversion for the people of the city.

7. KEDWARD BONE'S TOWER

Apart from Wulvera and the ur-priests of the Holy Triad, Kedward Bone is the most powerful and dangerous inhabitant of

Scuttlecove. He's lived in town since its founding and long ago realized that, given the direction the city was looking to grow, the drug trade in town would be the healthiest and most profitable of them all. After all, who needs to escape reality more than a down-on-his-luck, depressed pirate?

Kedward quickly managed to take control of all the major inflow of various drugs, and since then has managed to control the trade with astonishing ease. Almost all of the actual dealing is performed by his numerous minions down in the Waterfront. These drug dealers are allowed to keep half the money they make; the other half is paid directly to Kedward. In return, he provides protection for the drug dealers as needed, and even helps provide new customers by wandering the streets of Scuttlecove and casting *addiction* on passers-by.

Kedward Bone's stone tower is comprised of five stories of well-warded, well-protected floors. The first floor consists of one large room used to entertain guests and interview future business partners. It is here that he arranges to meet with the party not long after they arrive in town.

Kedward is a tall, gaunt figure. His visage is quite shocking to behold; his face is a terrible mess of bonespurs formed long ago by a rare disease. Although he can afford to have the bonespurs cured, Kedward lets them be since they help make his image more menacing. Although he is far from pleasant to talk to (he is both incredibly vain and chronically condescending to anyone but his familiar) or look at, he is a shrewd businessman who has earned his place of power in Scuttlecove without having to kill a single person. He is rarely seen without a double-bladed magic scythe of his own design, a double weapon that requires an Exotic Weapon proficiency to wield properly. Unlike most wizards, he does not shy away from melee combat.

Kedward does not use drugs himself, as he is a student of all things diabolical and doesn't want to cloud his judgment when dealing with dangerous entities of the underworld. His studies of the infernal realms have rewarded him with an imp familiar. Disturbingly, Kedward has taken the notion of a "familiar" quite literally; he and the imp Matylda are quite fond of each other and spend much of their free time alone exploring each other's capacity for perversion and lust.

Kedward is a 5th-level Diabolist; a prestige class that focuses on the study of devils that is fully detailed in the *Book of Vile Darkness*.

Kedward Bone, Male human Ftr1/Wiz6/Diabolist5: CR 12; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d10 plus 11d4; hp 33; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Atk +5/+0 melee (2d4+3 plus 1d6 fire/crit ×4, *+1 flaming double-bladed scythe*) and +5 melee (2d4+2 plus 1d6 cold/crit ×4, *+1 frost double-bladed scythe*); SA spells, diabolism +2d6; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +10; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 20, Wis 12, Cha 5.

Skills: Alchemy +18, Bluff +6, Craft (weaponsmith) +5, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Scry +11, Spellcraft +14. *Feats:* Alertness (when Matylda is within reach), Ambidexterity, Corrupt Spell (vile feat), Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (double-bladed scythe), Evil Brand (vile feat), Malign Spell Focus (vile feat), Scribe Scroll, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Wizard Spells Prepared (4/6/5/5/4/3/1; base save DC = 15 + spell level): 0—*light, mage hand, ray of frost, read magic;* 1st—*burning hands, enlarge, grease, magic missile, true strike, unseen servant;* 2nd—*addiction*, bull's strength, corrupt grease†, darkbolt†*, mirror image;* 3rd—*corrupt Melf's acid arrow†, displacement, fireball, greater magic weapon;* 4th—*corrupt lightning bolt†, dimension door, lesser geas, stoneskin;* 5th—*corrupt phantasmal killer†, teleport, wall of force;* 6th—*disintegrate.*

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*burning hands, cause fear, detect secret doors, enlarge, feather fall, grease, identify, mage armor, magic missile, magic weapon, shield, spider climb, stupor*, tongue tendrils†*, true strike, unseen servant;* 2nd—*addiction*, blur, bull's strength, cat's grace, darkbolt†*, devil's tongue†*, endurance, invisibility, levitate, Melf's acid arrow, mirror image, see invisibility, shatter, shriveling†*, web, wither limb†*;* 3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, displacement, drown†*, fireball, fly, gaseous form, greater magic weapon, haste, lightning bolt, love's pain†*, suggestion;* 4th—*dimension door, dimensional anchor, ice storm, lesser geas, liquid pain*, phantasmal killer, scrying, stoneskin, wrack†*;* 5th—*cone of cold, dismissal, forbidden speech†*, stop heart†*, teleport, wall of force;* 6th—*disintegrate, legend lore, planar binding.*

†These are evil spells; the save DC for these spells is 17 + spell level due to Kedward's Malign Spell Focus feat.

Note: If you're not using the *Book of Vile Darkness*, feel free to substitute spells from other products for the spells marked with an asterisk.

Diabolism: Once per day, Kedward can grant one of his spells greater magical power. This spell must be one that affects a target or area (one that does not include himself); it deals an additional +2d6 points of unholy damage to any target of good alignment.

Possessions: +1 flaming/+1 frost double-bladed scythe, ring of protection +1, wand of mage armor (19 charges), *wand of invisibility* (21 charges), *wand of haste* (22 charges), *wand of dispel magic* (18 charges), *wand of shield* (28 charges), *headband of intellect +2, slippers of spider climbing.* In addition, Kedward's tower holds an assortment of various drugs totaling 15,000 gp in value.

Matylda, Female Imp Familiar: Small Outsider (lawful, evil); HD 3d8; hp 16; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 21 (touch 15, flat-footed 18); Atk +8 melee (1d4 and poison, sting); SA poison, spell-like abilities; SQ improved evasion, share spells, empathic link, can deliver touch spells for Kedward, damage reduction 5/silver, SR 5, poison immunity, fire resistance 20, see in darkness, polymorph, regeneration 2; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +15, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Search +5, Spellcraft +5, Spot +5. *Feats:* Dodge, Weapon Finesse (sting).

8. PARTS IS PARTS

This grim tower is built entirely of bones. The squat, two-story structure is owned by an enterprising necromancer by the name of Rhemus Caldakar (male gnome Nec10), a one time adventuring companion of Kedward Bone who now makes a living selling body parts. He is currently on the mainland, restocking his supply of halfling baby fat. His tower is locked up tight and warded with several necromantic traps and undead guardians.

9. SKINDANCER ACADEMY

This square tower of ivory is easily the tallest structure in Scuttlecove, with the exception of the Palace. Ten stories high, this building houses an order of bards who call themselves Skindancers after an erotic form of nude dancing coupled with stylistically torturing willing guests with needles and scalpels. Now that Porphyry House has all but dominated the sex trade, the bards of the academy spend the majority of their time focusing on the art of performance torture. They also bring in a respectable income by hiring out their services as healers of wounds and diseases. They are willing to offer their services to anyone who can pay. Performance torture can cost anywhere between 50 to 500 gp per 1-hour session (more if curative magic is requested), and healing spells can be had at the bargain price of 500% normal cost.

The academy is run by an attractive woman whose body is an intricate network of fine scars; her name is Beryoil Whistlecut (female halfling Brd11). Although she might seem friendly, her taste in pleasure is anything but.

10. PLAZA OF HANGING RUIN

Apart from the docks and arena, the Plaza of Hanging Ruin is the only structure in Scuttlecove built and maintained by the Holy Triad. This terrifying structure consists of metal and wood beams arranged in a series of concentric squares. Victims are hung from this frame on hooks and spiked chains.

For the low price of 100 gp, anyone can pay to have someone mounted on the Plaza of Hanging Ruin. No questions asked. Aside from the random tax collections, this is the greatest money-maker for the Holy Triad. Executions performed on the Plaza should be treated as crucifixions (see the *Book of Vile Darkness* for details).

11. ERALAKNI'S EMPORIUM

This large structure of green stone is owned and run by an industrious half-orc named Eralakni (female half-orc Exp8). The building is a sort of miniature marketplace with private booths that can be rented out to merchants for the fairly high price of 20 gp a day.

12. MONASTERY OF DIRE HUNGER

This grim structure is built of basalt and reinforced with strips of iron. This ominous building is the stronghold of the Order of Dire Hunger, a cabal of monks that long ago stumbled upon a method to make physical their basest emotions and separate them from their minds. The Monks of Dire Hunger were once human but are now twisted, monstrous parodies of the human frame. Their strongest belief is that true transcendence from the physical to the spiritual can be reached only by consuming nothing but one's own species.

Today, the Monks of Dire Hunger serve the Holy Triad as enforcers, tax collectors, and general, all-purpose thugs. There are 102 Monks of Dire Hunger in Scuttlecove, and at any one time at least two thirds of them reside in their fortress. When their masters, the ur-priests, retreated into their own palace, the monks followed suit and went into seclusion in this building.

13. THE RUSTY SHUNT

The Rusty Shunt is a fairly well-built, two-story wooden tavern and inn, and perhaps the safest place to rest and relax in Scuttlecove. This inn is owned and run by a portly man named Lars Landicaster (male human Rgr8), a retired bounty hunter who has a strict code against harming paying customers. His prices are triple standard, but it might be well worth the price for a safe place to rest.

14. PORPHYRY HOUSE

This building is the source of the troubles afflicting Scuttlecove. It is detailed in full later in the adventure.

15. SCUTTLECOVE PALACE

This enormous walled complex is a mystery to all of Scuttlecove's citizens. Visitors are not allowed to enter.

The main structure is a vast palace built years ago by slaves of the Holy Triad. These slaves have since vanished, and it is unknown as to what lurks within the building's walls apart from the three ur-priests. The ur-priests have all but walled themselves off from Scuttlecove and aren't even aware of the troubles in town. They are engaged in a sort of spirit quest, searching for the location of an ancient artifact known as the *Shadar Pool* that allows them to transcend the mortal limits of power and skill. (The Shadar Pool was described in "The Razing of Redshore" in *Dungeon* #92.) Each of the ur-priests is a 20th-level character (Ari12/Ur-priest8).

EVENTS

The following five events should occur in the following order. Apart from the order in which they occur, the timing of the events is left to you to stage.

EVENT 1: THE SORRY CASE OF AARON ISLARAN

The Monks of Dire Hunger are not the only people who notice the arrival of outsiders. A poor, drug-addicted wretch by the name of Aaron Islaran notices the party before long, as well. Aaron was once a fairly successful aristocrat from a

coastal city on the mainland. He came to Scuttlecove months ago, tracking his missing sister Alyssa here. He believed that she was kidnapped by pirates and brought here to be sold as a sex slave or worse. Upon arriving in town, he quickly found himself overwhelmed. Nonetheless, he began his investigations, and before long he made an awful discovery. His sister had not been kidnapped; rather, she had run away from home to join the ranks of the Skindancers after hearing about the exotic and tempting organization from a sailor friend. Unfortunately, not long after she joined the Skindancers, she was assaulted by a lustful thug in a dark alley. Alyssa killed her attacker, but the next night his friends tracked her down and dragged her to the Plaza of Hanging Ruin, where they paid a Monk of Dire Hunger to string her up. Aaron found her body hanging from the plaza a day later.

He has since sunk into a pit of depression, vowing vengeance on those responsible for her death. Unfortunately, he has no idea who these thugs might be. He quickly became addicted to sannish, and not long after, he met Kedward Bone. He told Kedward his story, and he must have impressed the wizard because Kedward promised to help him track down his sister's killers if Aaron would help Kedward by keeping an eye out for any other visitors from the mainland, especially those who look strong and well equipped. If Aaron finds such a group, he is to follow them, find out what they're doing in Scuttlecove, and determine if they seem to be as skilled and competent as they look. If the individual or group checks out, Aaron has been told to approach them and invite them to speak with Kedward at his tower. To further cement his deal with the addict, Kedward supplies Aaron with all the sannish he can take and still perform this duty.

Of course, Kedward has no plans of fulfilling his promise to Aaron. He employs dozens of other people who watch the streets for recruits, but Aaron is easily his most eager-to-please minion. Once he spots the party, Aaron follows them around for some time, trying to judge their strengths and work up enough courage to approach them. Chances are he is spotted before he can do so; each day that passes after their first in town, every party member can attempt a Spot check (DC 20) to recognize that they're being followed.

If he is confronted, Aaron panics and breaks down in tears. He tells his whole story to anyone who listens, and then begs the newcomers to come speak to his friend in the red tower. He describes Kedward in glowing terms as an upright citizen in a town of dregs and despair. Characters who make an Alchemy check (DC 15) notice the tell-tale signs of sannish addiction (blue lips), and might realize that Aaron is in worse shape than he looks.

Helping Aaron track down and kill the thugs who killed Alyssa earns his everlasting friendship, but details of this operation are not presented here. If the party manages to get him back to the mainland and off the sannish, they have earned a fairly powerful ally in high society.

Ad-Hoc XP Award: If the party manages to rescue Aaron, award them experience as if they had defeated him in combat.

Aaron Islaran, Male Human Ari10: CR 9; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 10d8+10; hp 55; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Atk +7/+2 melee (1d3 subdual, unarmed strike); SQ sannish addiction; AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8 (currently 5), Cha 17.

Skills: Diplomacy +16, Handle Animal +16, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +15, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (local) +15, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +15, Ride +14. *Feats:* Great Fortitude, Leadership, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Weapon Focus (rapier).

Sannish Addiction: Aaron is under the influence of sannish and takes an average of two doses daily. His Wisdom is more or less hovering at a score of 5 as a result, since each time he takes the drug he suffers a point of Wisdom damage. Kedward is careful to keep Aaron stocked with only enough sannish to keep him from knocking himself out with the drug. A dose of sannish persists for 1d4 hours and causes euphoria. Initiative checks suffer a –2 penalty and the user is immune to pain-induced penalties.

Possessions: 3 doses of sannish, stinking and soiled clothes. Aaron has sold all his other equipment to buy food, water, and more sannish.

EVENT 2: VISIT WITH KEDWARD BONE

This event most likely occurs after Aaron brings the party to meet Kedward Bone; it takes place on the ground floor of his tower (encounter area 7). It can occur at any that Kedward wishes, as long as he doesn't have to leave his tower. If the party never encounters Aaron, the wizard eventually hears of their presence in the city and sends Matylda out to invite them for a talk. It's also possible that the party is referred to Kedward by informants in the city or by Divination magic; he is, after all, probably the most knowledgeable person in the city when it comes to local events.

Kedward has invested too much time in his drug dealing business to sit idly by as a profitable new drug is introduced by an unknown competitor. He wants the inflow of this drug in town to stop, no matter what the price. He's even willing to go so far as to ally with non-evil adventurers, normally his most despised breed of creature. Throughout his interactions with the party, he wears an expression of thinly veiled disgust at being forced to interact in a non-destructive manner with such beings.

Kedward has done a fair amount of research into what's going on in town, and he knows everything there is to be found with Gather Information checks, save for Tyralandi's name. His theory is that Porphyry House is getting ready to do to the drug trade what they've already done to the prostitution trade: namely, eliminate the competition while introducing a superior product to the market.

His proposal to the group is that they investigate the Porphyry House, find out who is manufacturing demon's breath there, what their plans are, and make sure that the plans cease. If they can secure a sample of the drug for him as well, he's willing to pay handsomely for it. If key players in the Porphyry House end up dead, Kedward would not mind in the slightest. He's never had much of an interest in the brothel, since they can't scratch his itch the way Matylda can.

In any case, Kedward doesn't want to risk his or Matylda's life in open conflict with Porphyry House. More importantly, he doesn't want to leave his tower unguarded in these troubled times. If the party agrees to this task, he helps them in whatever way he can; casting spells at no charge, allowing the group to sleep in his tower (ground floor only—it's uncomfortable but relatively safe), and possibly even teaching wizard PCs some new spells. He throws in some free samples from his drug stores as well if he thinks that helps placate the PCs. You can assume he has about 5,000 gp of each of the following drugs available in his tower to hand out: baccaran, devilweed, mushroom powder, redflower leaves, rhul, sannish, and vodare. If hard pressed, he might even consent to the loan of a few of his magic items, although he never gives up his magic double-bladed scythe.

EVENT 3: THE ENEMY OF YOUR ENEMY

Eventually, Tyralandi becomes aware of the characters and realizes that she might be able to use them to further her agendas. It's up to you when and where she contacts the group, but it should occur before the PCs make their first major foray into Porphyry House. Of course, the party members might make the decision for you by learning her name and tracking her down.

During the day, Tyralandi retreats to the surrounding wilderness to rest; she always chooses a different location to prevent her enemies from ambushing her. When she decides to contact the party, she approaches cautiously and warily. She makes it clear that she'd rather talk than fight, but she is accompanied nonetheless by six *charmed* Scuttlecove Thugs she's gathered together for protection. If the party attacks, she activates her blinding beauty and flees, leaving her *charmed* thugs to fight the group before she attempts peaceful contact again the next day with a new batch of six thugs. If the party rebuffs her again, she attacks, enraged and insulted.

If Tyralandi is able to make peaceful contact, the party can learn an awful lot from her. She explains that she wants the party's aid in tracking down and killing a cult of Demogorgon worshipers. She tells them that the cult is quite large and powerful. She proposes a short term truce; she knows that the Demogorgon cultists are up to no good and her

NEW EXOTIC WEAPON

Double-bladed Scythe: A double-bladed scythe is a double weapon. You can fight with it as if fighting with two weapons, but if you do, you incur all the normal attack penalties associated with fighting with two weapons as if you were using a one-handed weapon and a light weapon (see Attacking with Two Weapons on page 124 of the *Player's Handbook*). A creature using a double weapon in one hand, such as an ogre using a double-bladed scythe, can't use it as a double weapon.

A double-bladed scythe deals 2d4 points of damage with each blade, and has a ×4 critical hit multiplier. It weighs 20 pounds, costs 200 gp to manufacture, and its blades deal both piercing and slashing damage.

The blades of a double-bladed scythe face in opposite directions off the weapon's haft, making it look like an exaggerated "S" when viewed from the side. Heavy and cumbersome, learning to use the weapon is difficult. Those who try to learn to fight with a double-bladed scythe without proper instruction from someone already familiar with the weapon can often be spotted due to the lack of fingers, toes, or bigger limbs.

chances of defeating them improve greatly if she allies with the adventurers. She is willing to split treasure into equal shares as long as the Demogorgon cultists are put down.

Tyralandi knows three things for sure about the Demogorgon cultists:

• They are based in Porphyry House and use the brothel as a source of income to finance their cult.

• They are led by a powerful servant of Demogorgon named Wulvera who rarely leaves Porphyry House.

• Wulvera is preparing a major sacrifice to Demogorgon; Tyralandi is unsure what the nature or purpose of this sacrifice is, aside from the fact that Graz'zt will be unhappy if it is successful.

Even if the party refuses to join her, Tyralandi volunteers this information "as a token of good will" before departing, hoping that the party takes it upon themselves to take out the cult.

Tyralandi, Female Half-fiend/Half-nymph Rgr1/Thrall of Graz'zt4: CR 13; Medium-size Outsider (chaos, evil); HD 7d6+14 plus 1d10+2; hp 46; Init +4; Spd 30 ft., swim 20 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); AC 24, touch 17, flat-footed 20; Atk +11/+6 melee (1d6+2/crit 15–20, +1 *keen rapier*) and +5 melee (1d6, claw) and +2 melee (1d4, bite); SA blinding beauty (DC 23), unearthly beauty (DC 23), spell-like abilities, spells as a 9th-level druid, charm, spell betrayal +2d6, summon demon, two-weapon fighting ability, favored enemy (dwarves); SQ darkvision 60 ft., immune to poison, acid resistance 20, cold resistance 20, electricity resistance 20, fire resistance 20, dark charisma +2; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +14; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 20, Wis 24, Cha 28.

Skills: Bluff +20, Concentration +13, Craft (painting) +11, Diplomacy +17, Escape Artist +10, Heal +13, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (religion) +16, Perform (dance, limericks, melody) +12, Sense Motive +12, Use Magic Device +15. *Feats:* Tattoo Magic*, Expertise, Thrall to Demon (Graz'zt) (vile feat), Track, Violate Spell (vile feat), Weapon Finesse (rapier).

VILE ITEMS

Several items used in "Porphyry House Horror" appear in the *Book of Vile Darkness*. These items are reprinted here for your convenience.

Flesh Ring of Scorn: When this ring is pierced into the flesh of an evil outsider, it allows the outsider to automatically confirm critical threats made against nonoutsiders.

Caster Level: 1st; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *corrupt weapon; Market Price:* 8,000 gp.

Master Ring: The wearer of this iron ring, emblazoned with the symbol of a brooding falcon, can deal 3d6 points of damage per round as a free action to anyone wearing a *slave ring* keyed to it. Furthermore, the wearer can send and receive messages with anyone wearing a *slave ring* (as if using a *sending* spell) three times per day. Typically, a *master ring* has ten *slave rings* keyed to it.

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Forge Ring, *shriveling, sending; Market Price:* 40,600 gp (does not include *slave rings;* see below).

Ring of Weeping: This dull gray ring allows the wearer to bestow weeping, crippling sadness by touch. A humanoid touched by the wearer of a *ring of weeping* must succeed at a Will save (DC 11) or be incapacitated and helpless for 1 round, then suffering a –3 morale penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks, for 5 rounds. However, each time the ring affects a creature, the wearer suffers a –1 morale penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks for 5 rounds.

Caster Level: 5th; *Prerequisites:* Forge Ring, *sorrow; Market Price:* 3,000 gp.

Slave Ring: This iron ring, once worn, cannot be removed except by the wearer of the *master ring* keyed to it. The wearer is subject to horrible, flesh-disrupting damage by the wearer of the *master ring,* and she can also send and receive messages from him.

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Forge Ring; *Market Price:* 500 gp.

*Tattoo Magic originally appeared in the Forgotten Realms product *Lords of Darkness*. It is reprinted with the feats from the *Book of Vile Darkness* in the "Vile Feats" sidebar.

Charm (Sp): Tyralandi can produce an effect identical to that of a *charm person* spell at will. Caster level 4th; save DC 20).

Dark Charisma +2 (Ex): Tyralandi adds a +2 enhancement bonus to her Charisma score when making Animal Empathy, Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Handle Animal, and Perform checks.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*darkness, poison, unholy aura*; 1/day—*blasphemy, contagion, desecrate, dimension door, unhallow, unholy blight.* Caster level 10th; save DC = 16 + spell level.

Spell Betrayal (Su): When casting a damage-dealing spell at a target or targets denied their Dexterity bonus to AC, Tyralandi can deal an additional +2d6 points of damage.

Summon Minor Demon (Sp): Tyralandi can summon a 5-HD or less demon once per day. This ability functions as a *summon monster* spell cast by a 15th-level caster.

Druid Spells Prepared (6/6/6/5/3/2, base save DC = 17 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, flare, guidance, mending, preserve organ*, read magic*; 1st—*cure light wounds* ×2, *entangle, magic fang, obscuring mist, spider hand**; 2nd—*bull's strength, endurance, flaming sphere, lesser restoration* ×2, *produce flame*; 3rd—*cure moderate wounds, greater magic fang, serpents of Theggeron**, *spike growth, violated flaming sphere*; 4th—*claws of the savage**, *flame strike, violated call lightning*; 5th—*power leech**, *wall of thorns.*

Note: If you're not using the *Book of Vile Darkness*, feel free to substitute spells from other products for the spells marked with an asterisk.

Possessions: +2 glamered mithril breastplate, +1 keen rapier, ring of wisdom +4 (as *periapt of wisdom +4*), *ring of protection +2, bracers of the masochist, necklace of prayer beads* (*smiting*), *flesh ring of scorn, fangs of the vampire king tattoo, cure light wounds tattoo* ×2, *lesser restoration tattoo, cure moderate wounds tattoo* (caster level 9th).

Tyralandi's mother was raped and left for dead by an incubus nearly 100 years ago. Her mother recovered from the assault, only to die in childbirth when Tyralandi clawed her way out of the womb. Even as an infant, Tyralandi proved to be more than capable of providing for herself. As she grew older, she quickly found that her abilities were far more potent than the other denizens of the pastoral forest she lived in, so she wasted no time twisting those denizens and the forest itself to her will. After several decades, she grew bored with her empire and abandoned it to rot in search of something new.

She found Graz'zt. Impressed with her beauty and cruelty, Graz'zt offered her power and demonic grace if she would simply consent to become one of his Thralls; Tyralandi agreed instantly and hasn't regretted a day of it. She has completed numerous missions for the Dark Prince, including the assassination of several worshipers of Demogorgon. The current mission to destroy Porphyry House is the greatest one he has entrusted her with yet, and she desperately wants to prove that he didn't make a mistake in making her a Thrall.

Tyralandi is a gothic, haunting beauty, with nearly white skin, shoulder-length, straight black hair, ravenlike wings, red vestigial horns on her brow, talons on her dainty fingertips, and a prehensile tail. Blue, red, and black tattoos of arcane runes and coils of barbed vines adorn her back, shoulders, midriff, wings, arms, legs, and ankles. She tends

NEW MAGIC ITEM: BRACERS OF THE MASOCHIST

These mithril and darkwood bracers seem innocent enough until the inside surface is examined. This surface is studded with spikes, hooks, and razors. When adorned, they dig into the flesh of the wearer, causing intense pain and stunning the wearer for 1d4 rounds after the bracers are donned. If the wearer is a masochist or sado-masochist, the magic of these bracers activates once this period ends; otherwise, the bracers pop open and drop off.

When worn by a masochist or sado-masochist, the bracers heighten the victim's senses for pain and pleasure, and use this energy to help sustain the wearer's life. Every time the wearer suffers damage from a physical source, up to 2 points of damage are instantly converted into subdual damage. Thus, if the wearer takes 8 points of damage from a sword strike, she actually takes 6 points of damage and 2 points of subdual damage. Self-inflicted wounds are not affected by this power.

In converting damage, the bracers transform the wearer's pain into visible light, causing her wounds to glow as if with *faerie fire* (although the wearer isn't treated as if under the effects of a *faerie fire* spell). In addition, the wearer can use the bracers to activate one of three spell-like effects by inflicting self-inflicted wounds. First, the wearer can manifest a *light* spell by inflicting 1 point of damage on herself. By inflicting at least 5 points of damage on herself, she can create a *searing light* spell. This power can be activated up to three times a day. Finally, she can trigger a *sunburst* by inflicting a coup de grace (which does not have to be successful) on herself; this power can be activated once per day. In addition, the *sunburst* activates automatically if the wearer is killed. This *sunburst* is centered on the wearer, and although it does not affect her, it might well affect any allies in range. All three of these powers function at the 15th level of effect.

Healing magic does not mix well with these bracers. If the wearer receives any magical healing while wearing these bracers, she becomes nauseated for 1d6 rounds.

Caster Level: 15th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *light, sunbeam, sunburst,* creator must be a masochist or sado-masochist; *Market Price:* 65,000 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb.

to wear little apart from her glamered breastplate (which she alters to appear as a rainbow-feathered cloak), her magic jewelry (including the *flesh ring of scorn* pierced through her left nipple), her bracers, and her tattoos.

Since Tyralandi is a sado-masochist, she has already lost 1d3 × 10% of her total hit points to self inflicted wounds when she is encountered. Tyralandi gains a +4 circumstance bonus on saving throws against pain effects. She also gains a +1 circumstance bonus on attack and damage rolls, skill checks, and saving throws for the next round if she ever inflicts or takes 13 points of damage.

PORPHYRY HOUSE

Not including its prostitutes, Porphyry House is staffed entirely by yuan-ti cultists of Demogorgon. Daytime is Porphyry House's down time; yuan-ti servants clean the place, feed the "employees," prepare for any events being held that night, and rest. The House opens for business at sunset. At this time, the place becomes crowded rather quickly; entertainment at Porphyry House isn't cheap, but it is popular. The prices help insure that vagabonds and street trash stay out.

Walls: The walls of Porphyry House, both inner and outer, are made of solid porphyry.

VILE FEATS

Many of the NPCs in "The Porphyry House Horror" possess feats found in the *Book of Vile Darkness*. They have been reprinted here and on page 83 for your convenience.

BOOST SPELL RESISTANCE [GENERAL]

By making a deal with an evil power, your character makes himself even more resistant to magic.

Prerequisite: Any evil alignment.

Benefit: If your character already has an innate spell resistance, he gains a +2 profane bonus to his existing spell resistance score.

EVIL BRAND [VILE]

Your character is physically marked forever as a servant of an evil power greater than herself or as a villain who does not care who knows that she seeks only death, destruction, and misery for others. The symbol is unquestionable in its perversity, depicting a depravity so unthinkable that all who see it know beyond a doubt that the bearer is forever in the sway of the blackest powers.

Benefit: Evil creatures automatically recognize the symbol now emblazoned upon your character as a sign of her utter depravity or discipleship to a powerful patron, although the specific identity of the patron is not revealed. She gains a +2 circumstance bonus on all Diplomacy and Intimidate checks made against evil creatures.

MALIGN SPELL FOCUS [GENERAL]

Your character's magic spells with the evil descriptor are more potent than normal due to a deal she makes with an evil power.

Prerequisite: Any evil alignment.

Benefit: Add +2 to the DC for all saving throws against your character's spells with the evil descriptor.

SACRIFICIAL MASTERY [VILE]

Your character is skilled at offering living sacrifices to evil gods or fiends.

Prerequisite: Wis 15+.

Benefit: Your character gains a +4 profane bonus on Knowledge (religion) checks made when performing a sacrifice.

Normal: Without this feat, a character who performs a sacrifice makes a normal Knowledge (religion) check modified as described in Chapter 2 of the *Book of Vile Darkness*.

TATTOO MAGIC [ITEM CREATION]

You can crate tattoos that store spells.

Prerequisite: Craft (calligraphy) or Craft (painting) skill, spellcaster level 3rd+.

Benefit: You can create single-use magic tattoos.

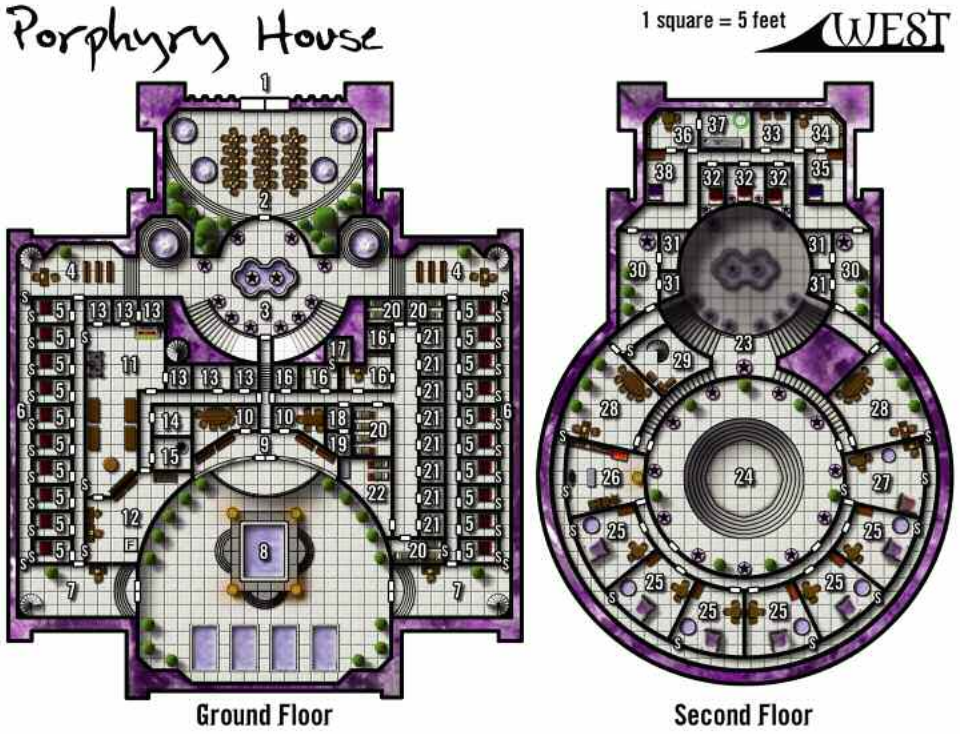
You can create a tattoo of any spell of 3rd level or lower that you know and that targets a creature or creatures. Creating a tattoo takes 1 hour, and it must be inked onto a creature with a corporeal body. When you create a tattoo, you set the caster level. The caster level must be sufficient to cast the spell in question and no higher than your own level. The base price of a tattoo is its spell level × its caster level × 50 gp. To create a tattoo, you must spend 1/25 of this base price in XP and use up raw materials costing half this base price.

When you create a tattoo, you make any choices that you would normally make when casting the spell. The bearer of the tattoo is the only one who can activate it and is always the target of the spell. Activating a tattoo requires the creature to touch the tattoo with either hand (the hand does not need to be empty). Activating a tattoo is a standard action that does not draw an attack of opportunity.

Any tattoo that stores a spell with a costly material component or an XP cost also carries a commensurate cost. In addition to the costs derived from the base price, you must expend the material component or pay the XP when creating the tattoo.

Normally a magic tattoo uses a magic item space on the creature's body. For example, a creature with a tattoo on one of its hands could not gain the benefits from a magic glove on that hand. Likewise, a creature with a magic tattoo on its back does not receive the benefits of a magic cloak, cape, or mantle. In effect, the magic tattoo is always the first item "worn" on that part of the body, negating the effects of all other items. A tattoo can be created that does not use a magic item space, but the base price of such a tattoo is double the normal value.

A magic tattoo can be erased with an *erase* spell as if it were magic writing. Failing to erase the tattoo does not activate it.



Inner and Outer Walls: 3 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 540; Climb DC 25.

Doors: Doors are made almost universally of wood carved with erotic and suggestive scenes. The doors are slightly thicker than normal to prevent noise from spilling from chamber to chamber. Every door is equipped with a good lock, although most chambers are left unlocked.

Inner Doors: 3 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 30; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 30.

The front doors are made of gilded iron and locked with an amazing lock.

Front Doors: 8 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 240; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 40.

Light: Most of the chambers are lit by softly glowing *continual flames* cast on gilded lamps or wall sconces.

The walls are decorated with hanging red and blue curtains, or risqué paintings. Erotic statuary stands in most available nooks and corners. All of these works of art are somewhat valuable; a particularly greedy party of four could clear out all the statues and paintings in a little more than a day's work, providing there is no one to stop them; the total collection is worth 5,000 gp and weighs about 1,000 pounds. Certain art objects in some rooms are mentioned specifically in the room descriptions; these treasures are not part of this total number.

The floors of the entire building are carpeted with deep soft carpet laid over a bedding of padding; walking around in Porphyry House is a little like walking on a very firm bed. Although there are no windows in Porphyry House, ventilation is maintained through a series of cleverly hidden air vents about an inch in diameter; these vents are at floor level in most rooms. The yuan-ti can use these vents to move from room to room with ease if they assume the form of a Tiny viper. Moving from one room to another on the upper floors takes 2d4 rounds.

The majority of the denizens of Porphyry House are yuan-ti purebloods—sixteen of them lair in the brothel. Next in rank are the Porphyry House guards, of which there are eight. Three Porphyry House madames oversee them, and they in turn report to Wulvera. Three yuan-ti abomination clerics live in the chambers near the temple, but they never venture up into the upper floors. All of the pureblood and halfblood yuan-ti use their Disguise skills to appear human or elven. In addition, several other deadly creatures lurk in the far corners of the structure.

Obviously, a frontal assault on Porphyry House is an exercise in suicide. A far more productive route is to infiltrate the House, either secretly or posing as prospective customers. Once inside, a stealthy or diplomatic party can explore much of the ground and upper floors with little opposition. And once they manage to penetrate the depths of Porphyry House, where many of the rank and file yuan-ti fear to go, combat is likely to become less overwhelming. Tyralandi's assistance should help the party, should they ally with the half-fiend nymph. Don't let the PCs rely too heavily on her aid, though; she might be unreasonably cooperative for an evil outsider, but she's not quick to volunteer her help, especially in dangerous situations.

Unless a character is obviously good-aligned, there is little reason for the staff of the Porphyry House to suspect anything when the party arrives. If they've already made clear an intention to burn the place down, the PCs might

need to make several Bluff or Disguise checks. Certainly, Bluff checks are in order if they are caught somewhere they aren't supposed to be. If the party knows that demon's breath is being manufactured somewhere in the house, they might try posing as interested clients who would like to purchase some of the drug. Unfortunately, this tactic immediately alerts Wulvera that something fishy is going on. If Wulvera realizes that troublemakers are loose in the House, she retreats to the underground chambers and prepares to defend them, leaving the defense of the upper floors to her underlings.

1. PORPHYRY HOUSE ENTRANCE (EL 10)

This elegant, squarish, two-story structure is constructed of dark purple and mauve porphyry. Four minarets rise from each of the building's four corners, and a central dome serves as a roof. The façade is decorated with several statues, bas-reliefs, and other carvings of handsome men and beautiful women striking lewd poses or engaged in various carnal activities.

The building looms over a crowded open area filled with pirates, thugs, street performers, and other lowlifes, hawking their illicit wares, getting in fistfights, and otherwise causing trouble. None of them approaches the building itself too closely, which makes the surrounding slovenly wood shacks and weathered, one-story stone buildings look even more ramshackle than they actually are. A pair of human guards—one male, one female, both quite attractive—stand before a pair of golden doors. The guards are dressed in purple ceremonial full plate, which is both form fitting and reveals far more skin than would seem practical. Their helmets are porcelain white masks of beautiful and handsome human faces, and they wield halberds. The doors themselves are 15 feet tall, golden, and detailed carvings on their faces depict a frenzied orgy.

During the day, the doors are kept locked with amazing locks (DC 40), and the two guards make sure no one messes with them. The doors are actually made of stone and painted with gold paint. At night, the doors remain closed but are unlocked. The building itself is unique in that it possesses no windows or side entrances except for the front doors.

Creatures: Anyone who approaches too closely (within 20 feet) is accosted by one of the guards, who demands to know what the character's business is. They allow anyone seeking companionship or entertainment to pass, as long as the person pay an entrance fee of 10 gp per person.

Porphyry House Guard, Male and Female Yuan-ti Pureblood Ftr3: CR 8; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 6d8+12 plus 3d10+6; hp 62; Init +6; Spd 30 ft. (20 ft. with armor); AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20; Atk +14/+9 melee (1d10+5/crit ×3, *+1 halberd*); SA spell-like abilities, psionics; SR 16; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 19.

Skills: Climb +7, Concentration +11, Disguise +4*, Hide +3*, Jump +7, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +14, Spot +14. *Feats:* Alertness, Blind-Fight, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Thrall to Demon (Demogorgon) (vile feat), Weapon Focus (halberd).

*Yuan-ti using chameleon power receive a +8 circumstance bonus to Hide checks, and yuan-ti purebloods receive a +5 racial bonus to Disguise checks when impersonating a

VILE FEATS (CONTINUED)

The remaining feats from non-core sources are reprinted here.

THRALL TO DEMON [VILE]

Your character formally supplicates himself to a demon prince. In return for his obedience, your character gains a small measure of power.

Benefit: Once per day, while performing an evil act, your character may call upon your demonic patron to add a +1 luck bonus on any one roll.

Special: Once your character takes this feat, he may not take it again; he may not be the thrall of more than one demon. Nor may he take the Disciple of Darkness feat.

VILE MARTIAL STRIKE [VILE]

Your character can focus evil power into her weapon blows.

Prerequisite: Cha 15+, Weapon Focus.

Benefit: Each time your character deals damage with a specific kind of weapon, she deals 1 additional point of vile damage. Vile damage can be healed only by magic case on consecrated or hallowed ground.

Special: Your character may take this feat more than once, selecting a different weapon each time.

VIOLATE SPELL [METAMAGIC]

Your character can transform your spells into evil spells, and the wounds they inflict are tainted with the foulest evil.

Prerequisite: Any evil alignment.

Benefit: This feat adds the evil descriptor to a violated spell. Furthermore, if the spell deals damage, half of the damage dealt is vile damage. For example, a violated lightning bolt cast by an 8th-level wizard deals 8d6 points of damage: 4d6 points of electricity damage and 4d6 points of vile electricity damage (but creatures immune to electricity take no damage). Thus, half the damage dealt by the spell is very difficult to heal. The violated spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

WILLING DEFORMITY [VILE]

Through scarification, self-mutilation, and supplication to dark powers, your character intentionally mars her own body.

Benefit: You character gains a +2 deformity bonus on Intimidate checks.

human. Armor check penalty has already been factored in to relevant skills.

Possessions: +1 glamered full plate, +1 halberd, gauntlets of ogre power, pouch with 30 gold.

Development: If the party attacks Porphyry House and then retreats, Wulvera orders the House closed for the immediate future and steps up her plans. Now, instead of sacrificing the participants of a Porphyry House orgy, she wants to sacrifice the party. A day after the attack, Wulvera abandons the upper floors of the house and relocates her minions to the dungeons below. She hopes to lure the party back into the House to sacrifice them. She sets guards to watch and wait for the party to return to the House, and once they are in its depths (probably looting), she has one of her clerics use the *wand of stone shape* from area **19** to close off the exit, sealing the party in the building. After this, she begins sending her minions up in groups to ambush and hopefully subdue or capture the party.

2. FOYER (EL 9)

This huge chamber is lit with numerous crystal chandeliers with *continual flames*. The walls are covered with purple and red curtains, and a large collection of erotic paintings. Similarly themed statues stand in various places along the walls, and a set of six large fountains with burbling, crystal clear water dominate the edges of the room. Twin gardens, complete with small trees, flank a domed archway to the south. The center of the room is taken up by large banquet tables.

During the evening, 4d6 customers of various types mill about this room, waiting to be invited into the antechamber to the south by one of the madames. The mood in this crowd is one of expectant tension. Four servers dressed in silks and veils weave about the room, delivering appetizers and drinks among the tables to keep the customers from getting too riled up. Every few hours, one of the madames appears in the archway to the south, allowing those who have been waiting into the antechamber and letting previous guests file out into this room to leave.

Creatures: The four Porphyry House servants are all pureblood yuan-ti, and as they serve their guests, they listen and watch to make sure no one in the room is here to cause trouble. The customers are nothing more than 1st-level warriors, and if a fight breaks out they joyously join the fray. The servants flee through the arch to the south, unwilling to expose their true natures in front of so many guests.

Yuan-ti Purebloods (4): hp 27 each; *Monster Manual* 190.

Randy Guests, Male and Female Human War1 (4d6): CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d8+1; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12; Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, club or shortsword); AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will –1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 11.

Skills: Intimidate +4, Ride +4, Swim +5. *Feats:* Improved Unarmed Strike, Toughness.

Possessions: leather armor, club or shortsword, 3d10 gp.

3. ANTECHAMBER (EL 10)

The architecture of this room is breathtaking. Twin pools stand in the center of a circular room with a vaulted ceiling that is open to the floor above. A twin pair of staircases arc gently up to this upper floor to the south, and a second pair of burbling fountains sit in alcoves around the corner to the left and right. But the most shocking sight in the room are the ten porphyry statues that stand around the perimeter; each is a nude sculpture of a 9-foot-tall beautiful woman or handsome man, and as you watch the statues animate with fluid motions, caressing their bodies and motioning to you invitingly.

When a madame leads a new batch of customers in from the foyer, she splits the group in two and has them file around the room and into the registration rooms to the east and west. The water in the fountain is pure and refreshing. The door to the south is kept locked with a good lock (Open Lock DC 30).

Creatures: The ten statues are large animated objects designed to allure and excite guests. If a guest requests it, any of the statues are available for companionship, although these are considered special requests and must be fulfilled upstairs. At Wulvera's command, these statues can be ordered to attack any non-yuan-ti they encounter.

Animated Porphyry Statues (10): CR 3; Large Construct; HD 4d10; hp 22; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14; Atk +5 melee (1d8+4, slam); SQ construct, hardness 8; AL N: SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -4; Str 16, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1.

4. REGISTRATION ROOMS

Guests are brought into these luxuriously appointed offices and seated on benches. One at a time, they are brought to the table where they are interviewed and registered in the Porphyry Book by one of the madames. The registration includes several personal questions such as the guest's name, address, sexual preference, a brief personal history, and a description of the type of companion they are looking for; characters who wish to provide false information must make a successful Bluff check. Anyone caught lying is escorted out of the House.

Companionship with one of the House's standard entertainers costs a mere 50 gp per hour, while special requests cost much more. If a character has a particular special request, a Diplomacy check opposed by the madame's own Diplomacy check is required to have the request granted, at which time the guest is led upstairs to Special Registration (area **28**).

The stairway leads up to a small observation deck in one of the minarets; these observation decks are not manned.

5. STANDARD GUEST ROOMS

Porphyry House has twenty standard guest rooms, each of which is inhabited by a man or a woman apparently ready to please his or her guest. None of these men or women are talkative or especially creative, but they are all quite accommodating. One of Porphyry House's main draws is the fact that there always seems to be just the right kind of companion for a visitor; the reason behind this is simple and disturbing.

During registration, a yuan-ti pureblood waits in a secret hall that connects all of these chambers with the Registration Rooms to the north. The yuan-ti listens in on the conversation, and when the guest indicates what they're looking for, the yuan-ti scurries off to the next available room and uses its *polymorph other* ability to transform the room's occupant into the appropriate form. Of course, if a person's request can be filled by the current form of one of the entertainers, no *polymorphing* is needed.

Creatures: Each of these rooms contains a docile and accommodating man or woman who is, in fact, a *polymorphed* creature of some sort. Mostly former harpies and gulguthydras, the yuan-ti still keep a few wolverines around as well; not as personable as trained gulguthydras or harpies, they remains easy to control and are quite susceptible to *polymorphing*. The creatures are horribly confused by the constant *polymorphings*, and all they know is that if they pleasure their guests well (the only action in their lives that has any consistency), they are rewarded with rest and good food. So they do their best.

Treasure: All of these *polymorphed* creatures wear *slave rings* so Wulvera can send messages to them or punish them as needed. As long as the creature's new form is humanoid, the rings do not *polymorph* with them. *Slave rings* are detailed in the *Book of Vile Darkness*. They can only be removed by the owner of the *master ring*, who can use a *sending* on anyone wearing a *slave ring* at will. In addition, the wearer of the *master ring* can (as a free action) deal 3d6 damage to the wearer of a *slave ring*.

6. POLYMORPHING PASSAGEWAY (EL 10)

These secret passageways are used by yuan-ti purebloods to gain access to the guest rooms as needed to prepare for new customers. During business hours, five purebloods lurk in each of these hallways.

Yuan-ti Purebloods (5): hp 27 each; *Monster Manual* 190.

7. ORGY REGISTRATION

Porphyry House often holds invitation-only orgies for their most dedicated and adventurous customers in the large room beyond these rooms. These two rooms are used to make sure that only invited guests are attending.

The stairway leads up to a small observation deck in one of the minarets; these observation decks are not manned.

The doors leading into the orgy hall (area **8**) are *arcane locked* on top of their normal, amazing quality locks. These locks require a DC 50 Open Locks check to bypass.

8. ORGY HALL (EL 6+)

This massive hall is dimly lit by glowing tiles in the ceiling and a set of four braziers around a large pool of water. Several other pools of heated water bubble away to the south, and dozens of large cushions lie strewn about the room. To the north a short balcony overlooks the room, beyond which you can see a bank of several tall mirrors. The room smells of sweat and deeper, muskier odors.

This is where Porphyry House hosts its orgies. The next orgy scheduled to take place is sometime in the near future—it is at this event that Wulvera intends to make her sacrifice to Demogorgon. In preparation for that event, she has had the three doors leading into this room enchanted with *arcane locks* to augment their already amazing locks; the DC to pick these locks is DC 50. The mirrors to the north are actually two way, allowing those in the observation hall to the north to watch.

Trap: Wulvera intends to sacrifice nearly two dozen enthusiastic customers in this room via a terrible poison called mindlure powder. The bulk of the poison is an inert, very fine white powder that she has sprinkled liberally on the carpet and in the cushions in the room. If the carpet or cushions are disturbed in any way, the powder quickly disperses into the air. A Spot check (DC 30) alerts a person to the fine particles in the air.

Once the poison is in the air, it can be triggered at any time by the casting of any spell with the Evil descriptor. Wulvera intends to have her succubus minion Wilarue take part in the orgy, and when the time is right she is to cast *unholy blight*. This won't hurt any of the evil guests in the room (although it might harm some of the entertainers), but it activates the poison. Without such a spell, the dust is harmless.

Anyone in contact with the poison must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 20) or suffer 3d6 points of initial and secondary Wisdom damage. The poison is designed to keep its victims conscious, though, and as a result it cannot drain a person below 1 Wisdom.

Mindlure Powder Trap: CR 6; poison 3d6 initial Wisdom damage, 3d6 secondary Wisdom damage; Fort save resists (DC 20); Spot (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 30).

Development: The poison becomes inert a minute after the secondary damage applies, at which time Wulvera and her three abomination yuan-ti priests enter the room with their supply of demon's breath drug. Wilarue then casts *charm monster* on each of the victims, and leads them up to Wulvera one at a time to die under *Demogorgon's Tooth*. Her total Knowledge (religion) bonus is +25 once she casts *sacrificial skill*; she must make a check for each victim (there are twenty victims in all). The DC for the check is 35, so success

is guaranteed if Wulvera takes 10 (which she can do if she isn't distracted). Each successful sacrifice grants her 105 "dark craft" experience points. In order to enhance the demon's breath drug so that its effects are permanent and far-reaching on a city scale, she must accumulate 1,250 dark craft experience points within 30 minutes. If she is successful, consult the "Conclusion" section to determine the effects.

See the *Book of Vile Darkness* for more information on dark craft experience points. If you're not using the *Book of Vile Darkness*, it's safe enough to say that without her twenty victims, Wulvera's ritual can't succeed.

9. OBSERVATION ROOM

This room is used by customers who wish only to observe the orgies that take place to the south. When she prepares her sacrifice, Wulvera and her yuan-ti abomination minions also lurk within this room until the time for their entrance.

The doors leading south into the orgy hall (area **8**) are *arcane locked* on top of their normal, amazing quality locks. These locks require a DC 50 Open Locks check to bypass.

10. MEETING ROOM

These rooms are used to meet with visitors who have business other than pleasure in Porphyry House. If the party claims to have spiderlily extract, one of the House madames agrees to meet with the group (along with two guards) here. She's authorized to pay 2,500 gp for the delivery, and she throws in a night of freebies in a special request room upstairs if any of the party members are interested. Anyone who decides to stay the night in Porphyry House is paired with Wilarue, who does her best to pry as much information from her partner as she can, especially concerning the PCs' source for the spiderlily extract and where they heard about Porphyry House's demand for the substance.

11. KITCHEN (EL VARIABLE)

This room is staffed by a pair of yuan-ti purebloods who prepare food and drinks for guests; most of the cooking and preparation happens during the afternoon just before the House opens. During this time, there can be as many as eight purebloods in here.

Yuan-ti Purebloods (2–8): hp 27 each; *Monster Manual* 190.

12. ENTERTAINER PREPARATION

This room is where the yuan-ti prepare newly captured and *polymorphed* creatures for servitude in Porphyry House. Ideally, the new addition has long since been broken and trained in the chambers below. This room also serves as a place for the yuan-ti to rest and relax during the night; there is a 20% chance that 1d6 yuan-ti purebloods are lounging in here during this time.

The trap door in the southeast corner of the room is hidden by carpeting; a Search check (DC 25) is required to find it. It is kept locked and leads down to area **39**.

Secret Trap Door: 3 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 30; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 30.

13. STORAGE

These rooms store a variety of food, firewood, linens, clothing, cheap alcohol, utensils, tools, and other pieces of miscellaneous gear. There is nothing of real interest in any of these storage rooms.

14. WORKROOM

Two tables sit in this room; each is covered with a variety of tools and devices for mending fabric or repairing furniture. The tools look well used but otherwise unremarkable.

15. WELL ROOM

This well drops 30 feet into a pool of fairly brackish saltwater. The drawing of water from the well is a daily chore for the yuan-ti; it must be purified before it can be used.

16. DOCUMENTS AND LIBRARY

These rooms store both idle reading material for the yuan-ti to relax with, as well as exhaustive records of their guests. None of the records have any indication that Porphyry House is anything other than a well-managed and profitable brothel, although the documents make for interesting reading; it seems that the yuan-ti keep records on *everything* their customers ask for . . .

17. TEMPORARY CELL

Troublemakers that can't or won't be escorted out are overpowered and then imprisoned in manacles in this room. Prisoners are not kept here more than a day while Wulvera decides what to do with them: ransom them back to their friends, release them, transfer them to the more permanent cells below the House, or execute them. No prisoners currently reside here, although any PCs who are captured might be kept in a cell for a short while.

The manacles are quite sturdy and of masterwork quality. They are also each fitted with amazing locks. The secret door to this room is also fitted with an amazing quality lock.

Secret Door: 3 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 30; Search DC 30; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 40.

Masterwork Manacles: 1 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 10; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 40.

18. PORNOGRAPHY LIBRARY

Although this room might look like any of the other libraries in the House, a cleverly hidden secret door sits in the south wall (Search DC 30 to find). The secret door is also locked with an amazing lock.

Secret Door: 3 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 30; Search DC 30; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 40.

Treasure: Part entertainment, part research, the shelves of this library are well stocked with all manner of texts and tomes about sex. The collection is quiet extensive, and to the right buyer is worth 1,500 gp.

19. WAND STORAGE (EL 4)

Much of the work around Porphyry House is not done through manual labor, but through the magic of a collection of wands. The Porphyry House madames and Wulvera herself are the only yuan-ti who are allowed into this chamber.

The secret door leading to this chamber is locked with an amazing lock.

Secret Door: 3 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 30; Search DC 30; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 40.

Trap: This room has been enchanted so that if a non-yuan-ti ever enters it, an *alarm* spell is triggered. This is a mental alarm that can be sensed by the Porphyry House madames and Wulvera.

In addition, the chest itself is warded with a *glyph of warding* that triggers if a non-yuan-ti opens the chest.

Iron-bound Chest: 3 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 15; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 40.

Glyph of Warding: CR 4; 2d8 cold damage in 5 ft. radius, Reflex save (DC 14) halves; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

Treasure: The following wands are stored in the chest: Two *wands of continual flame* (12 charges), a *wand of cure moderate wounds* (28 charges), a *wand of remove disease* (7 charges), a *wand of gentle repose* (15 charges), a *wand of stone shape* (4 charges), a *wand of animate dead* (10 charges), a *wand of restoration* (9 charges), and a *wand of glyph of warding* (3 charges).

20. GUARD BARRACKS (EL VARIABLE)

These rooms are used by the Porphyry House Guards to rest and relax in; during the day all but one bunk in each room is occupied by sleeping guards; two guards stand duty out front and the third patrols the halls. At night, only one sleeping guard is found herein. The remainder are on patrol throughout the House.

Creatures: These guards are identical to those that guard the front door.

Porphyry House Guards: hp 62; see area **1**.

21. PUREBLOOD BARRACKS (EL 7)

Eighteen yuan-ti purebloods live in these rooms, two to a double bunk. During the day, each room is full 70% of the time; otherwise they're empty. At night they're always empty.

Creatures: These more mundane guards comprise the standard yuan-ti denizen of the brothel.

Yuan-ti Purebloods (2 per room): hp 27 each; *Monster Manual* 190.

22. INFIRMARY

This is where the yuan-ti bring injured or sick entertainers. The most common operations performed here are abortions. The yuan-ti madames find fetuses delicious, and they eat them on the spot so they don't have to share with their sisters.

23. LANDING (EL 11)

The stairs end at a large landing, dominated by a tall Porphyry statue of a stern-looking bald woman wearing a robe. The statue seems a bit out of place when compared with the works of erotic art you have seen so far.

This statue is more than a depiction of Wulvera; it is a dangerous guardian that prevents the passage upstairs by anyone not guided by a yuan-ti.

Creature: The stone golem moves to intercept anyone who is not escorted by a yuan-ti. It does not attack unless it is attacked first or further efforts to bypass it are attempted.

Porphyry Stone Golem: hp 77; *Monster Manual* 108.

24. LECTURE HALL (EL 10)

This dome-shaped room must be located directly under the central dome of the structure. The ceiling vaults to over 70 feet high in the center of the room, which contains a depressed, stadiumlike bowl. Large potted plants and more of the strangely alluring animated statues of beautiful people are arrayed around the rim of the room.

The majority of the yuan-ti in Porphyry House are not allowed to enter the underground level. Thus, when Wulvera needs to address her cultists as a group, she does so in this room. Meetings are held on the 1st and 15th of every month; on these days the Porphyry House is closed.

Creatures: The eleven statues around the edge of the room are all large animated objects. Unlike those found downstairs, these are programmed to attack anyone that enters the room unless a yuan-ti is present in the chamber.

Animated Porphyry Statues (11): hp 22; see area **3** for details.

25. SPECIAL REQUEST ROOMS

This large room is exquisitely appointed with fine draperies, paintings, and statues, all with a theme of eroticism. A dresser and a table sit near the door, and against the opposite wall you see a large bubbling tub, an enormous pile of cushions, and between them, a huge canopied bed. A strange smell floats in the air, and as you breathe it you begin to grow a little light-headed and aroused.

These rooms are for elite guests of Porphyry House. Any request for companionship of any kind is fulfilled by the yuan-ti, who view these rooms as their pride and joy. Popular special requests in the past have included requests for

multiple companions, dead companions (preserved with the *wand of gentle repose*), animated companions, companions of exotic species, outsiders, the companionship of the animated porphyry statues, and companions that might have been resistant to the guest's advances but have been *charmed* by yuan-ti to make them more agreeable. In truth, the type of entertainment to be found in these rooms is limited only by the imagination of the guest, although the more imaginative guests are asked to place their request several days in advance so the yuan-ti can arrange things.

As with the chambers downstairs, a secret passage allows the yuan-ti to observe activities in this room and to enter each chamber stealthily if necessary. The exact nature of the current guests in these chambers is left for the DM to detail, although the above suggestions should provide springboards for other encounters.

The strange smell in the air is in fact incense steeped in mordayn vapor. The drug is too diluted to have any actual effects on those who breathe its fumes, apart from what is mentioned in the boxed text.

26. TORTURE CHAMBER

Although at first glance this room looks to be a fairly standard, if well-supplied, torture chamber, closer inspection reveals the room for what it truly is. Padded manacles, silk ropes, containers of lubricant, and other similar materials suggest that the equipment in this room is used to produce pleasure as well as pain.

This room serves as an additional special request room for guests of a sadistic or masochistic personality. Nonetheless, it can be used as a traditional torture chamber if Wulvera wishes to squeeze some information out of captured intruders. All of the various torture devices detailed in the *Book of Vile Darkness* are available in this well-stocked room.

27. WILARUE'S CHAMBER (EL 10)

This room is extravagantly appointed, with a massive bed, bath, and copious amounts of cushions on the floor. A large workdesk, its surface cluttered with books and other objects, sits in the far corner.

Unlike other rooms in this area of the House, this chamber is not normally offered to those who make special requests, for it is the personal chamber of a succubus by the name of Wilarue.

Creature: Wilarue was once a minion of Graz'zt, but after being betrayed by an ally, a cultist of Demogorgon animated her as an undead minion. Wilarue has worked with Wulvera since Porphyry House was built, and she finds the place both relaxing and enjoyable; as long as Wulvera continues to respect her she has no intention of leaving.

Wilarue is a corpse succubus, and has the corpse creature template (described in the *Book of Vile Darkness*, although Wilarue's specific abilities are detailed here). Her skin is pasty and yellow, her wings rotting, her hair falling out in patches, and her eyes empty sockets swarming with beetles. She still enjoys tempting, raping, and killing mortals, and she uses her alternate form to appear more attractive at those times. She gets a kick out of assuming her natural form just before she slays her lover.

Wilarue, Corpse Succubus: CR 10; Medium-size Undead (chaotic, evil); HD 6d12; hp 39; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (clumsy); AC 20, touch 20, flat-footed 20; Atk +9 melee (1d3+3, 2 claws) or +9 melee (1d6+4, slam); SA spell-like abilities, energy drain, summon tanar'ri; SQ undead, damage reduction 20/+2, SR 14, tanar'ri qualities, alternate form, tongues; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 17, Dex 11, Con —, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 20.

Skills: Bluff +11, Concentration +10*, Disguise +11, Escape Artist +6, Hide +6, Knowledge (the planes) +9, Listen +16, Move Silently +6, Ride +6, Search +9, Spot +16. *Feats:* Boost Spell Resistance (vile feat), Combat Casting.

*Includes the +4 bonus for Combat Casting.

Possessions: cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +1, potion of charisma, potion of hiding.

Treasure: A locked drawer in the desk (DC 30 to open) contains a tightly tied pouch made of strips of human skin. Inside are Wilarue's private funds: 150 pp, an emerald (900 gp), a black opal (800 gp), and a tourmaline (110 gp).

28. SPECIAL REGISTRATION

Guests who successfully request something special are brought here for an extensive interview with a Porphyry House madame. On the surface, this interview is simply work out the exact details of the guest's request. In truth, it is used as an opportunity for the yuan-ti to study their guest. This is where the majority of the money is made in Porphyry House, so the yuan-ti like to make sure that they understand special requests as much as possible. Costs for special accommodations vary wildly, but always cost at least 2,500 gp. Costs for spells such as *gentle repose, grease, dominate person, animate dead, polymorph other, animate object, regeneration, magic jar, simulacrum,* or anything else the guest requires increases this base cost by the standard amount for the spell being cast. In most cases, the yuan-ti must secure these spells from outside sources; this increases the cost of the entire total by 25%, or by 100% if the yuan-ti are forced to bring in an outside spellcaster (which is the case for most sorcerer/wizard spells).

29. SECRET STAIRWELL (EL 4)

The secret door leading into this room is locked. This stairwell is the main entrance into the chambers below the Porphyry House. They lead down to area **42**.

Secret Door: 3 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 30; Search DC 30; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 40.

Trap: The bottom step of the staircase is trapped with a *glyph of warding*, placed there using the wand from area **19**. It

triggers when a non-evil creature passes over it.

Glyph of Warding: CR 4; *hold person* at caster level 5th, Will save (DC 14) negates; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

Treasure: The crates contain various alchemical supplies and equipment. Anyone with at least 5 ranks in Alchemy knows that this particular collection seems to be specialized in the fabrication of drugs. In addition to the alchemical equipment and supplies, searchers find a box containing 50 doses of sannish. Sannish is worth 15 gp per dose; the total value of this stash is 750 gp.

30. GUARDIANS OF THE INNER CHAMBERS (EL 11)

Both of these hallways are guarded by a stone golem similar in shape and size to the one found in area **23**.

Creatures: The stone golems attack anyone who enters the room without a yuan-ti escort.

Porphyry Stone Golem: hp 77; *Monster Manual* 108.

31. STOREROOMS

These crates contain various costumes, tools, decorations, and miscellaneous pieces of equipment and costume jewelry; these materials are used to decorate the special request rooms as the House's guests require.

32. MADAME CHAMBERS (EL 10)

These three rooms are the private chambers of the three Porphyry House madames. Not surprisingly, all three rooms are extravagantly decorated with plenty of rare artwork and valuable statuary.

Creatures: During the day, there's an 80% chance that one of the Porphyry House madames is in one of these rooms resting. If caught off guard, the madame turns into a tiny Viper and tries to escape through one of the ventilation shafts to warn her sisters and Wulvera.

Porphyry House Madame, Female Pureblood Yuan-ti Brd3/Clr1/Rgr1 (3): CR 10; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid (6 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 7d8+7 plus 3d6+3 plus 1d10+1; hp 58; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Atk +10/+5 melee (1d4+1/crit 17–20, *+1 keen dagger*) or +8/+3 melee (1d4+1/crit 17–20, +1 keen dagger) and +9 melee (1d4+1, claw); SA spell-like abilities, psionics, bardic music, rebuke/control undead, two-weapon fighting ability, favored enemy (humans); SQ bardic knowledge; SR 16; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +16; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 22, Cha 21.

Skills: Bluff +12, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +5*, Gather Information +12, Hide +9*, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +17, Perform (ballad, dance, drama, flute, harp, melody, storytelling) +12, Profession (madame) +13, Spot +17. *Feats:* Alertness, Blind-Fight, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Thrall to Demon (Demogorgon) (vile feat), Track.

*Yuan-ti using chameleon power receive a +8 circumstance bonus to Hide checks, and yuan-ti purebloods receive a +5 racial bonus to Disguise checks when impersonating a human.

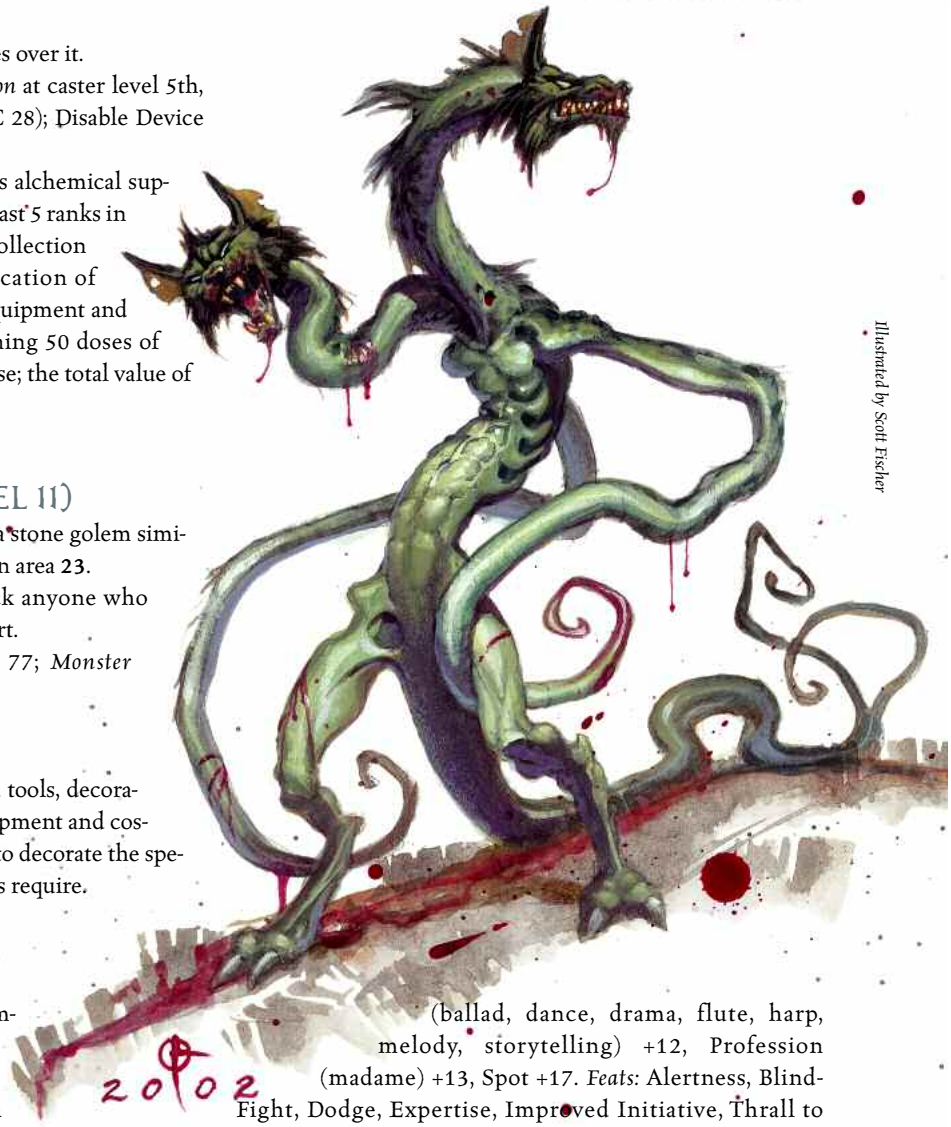
Cleric Spells Prepared (3/4, base save DC = 16 + spell level): 0—*create water, guidance, slash tongue**; 1st—*command, cure light wounds, demonflesh*†, heartache*, slow consumption**.

Note: If you're not using the *Book of Vile Darkness*, feel free to substitute spells from other products for the spells marked with an asterisk.

†Domain Spell. *Domains:* Corruption (may ignore the hardness of an attacked object once per day), Demonic (gains +1 divine bonus on attack and damage rolls when fighting unarmed)

Bard Spells Known (3/3, base save DC = 15 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic;* 1—*charm person, silent image, unseen servant.*

Possessions: +1 keen dagger, ring of protection +1, potion of love ×2, *potion of glibness, Heward's Handy Haversack, bracers of*



Illustrated by Scott Fischer

armor +1, agony (2 doses), Mordayn Vapor (2 doses), 1,000 gp in jewelry, Porphyry House lesser master key (opens all locks on the first floor of Porphyry House).

33. HOUSE TREASURY (EL VARIABLE)

This plain, bare room is uncarpeted and only a single *continual flame* torch lights it. A pair of huge sturdy locked chests sit against the opposite wall.

Creature (EL 6): This room is guarded by a personal, well-loved pet of Wulvera's: a fiendish half-dragon huge viper. The creature wears a *ring of sustenance* on one of its draconic claws, but Wulvera still enjoys feeding it the bodies that occasionally pop up in Porphyry House.

Advanced Fiendish Half-green Dragon/Huge Viper: CR 6; Huge Dragon; HD 6d10+12; hp 45; Init +4; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 20 ft. (average, not at all in this room), swim 20 ft.; AC 19,touch 12, flat-footed 15; Atk +11 melee (2d6+4 and poison, bite) and +6 melee (2d8+2, claws); SA poison (DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con), smite good 1/day (+6 damage vs. a good foe), breath weapon (30 ft. long cone of gas, 6d6 acid damage, Reflex save DC 17 halves); SQ scent, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, immune to sleep and paralysis, immune to acid, cold and fire resistance 10, DR 5/+1; SR 12; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Skills: Balance +16, Climb +15, Hide +4, Listen +9, Spot +9.
Feats: Weapon Focus (bite).

Possessions: ring of sustenance.

Trapped Chest: hardness 5; hp 15; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 40.

Trap (EL 5): The front door and both chests are locked with amazing quality locks. Additionally, each chest is trapped with a small sprayer that fills the room with ungol dust if the chest is opened.

Ungol Dust Vapor Trap: CR 5; all targets in room, onset delay (2 rounds); poison (Fortitude save DC 15 resists, 1 Cha/1d6 Cha + 1 Cha [permanent drain]); Search (DC 20), Disable Device (DC 16).

Treasure: The treasure stored in the chests consists of a fair portion of Porphyry House's income, although the bulk of the temple's treasure is kept below in Demogorgon's temple. The left chest contains 40,000 sp, and the right chest contains 2,000 gp and 300 pp, all sorted in 100 coin bags.

34. ARATHANTHUS' STUDY (EL 14+)

This room, unlike most of the others you have seen so far, is quite tastefully decorated. It is a comfortable looking study, with comfortable chairs, several bookshelves and a writing desk.

Arathanthus, the orlath demon sent to provide assistance and observe Wulvera's progress, uses this room to meet with visitors or other yuan-ti. He assumes human form to do so.

Creature: There is only a 10% chance Arathanthus is present when this room is entered; otherwise he can be found in area **46** below. If he is present here, he is speaking with Wulvera (50%), a Porphyry House madame (25%), or he's alone (25%); he looks amused at interruptions before *teleporting* down to the temple to prepare its defenses.

Arathanthus, Orlath Demon: 112 hp; see the appendix for complete statistics.

35. ARATHANTHUS'S BEDCHAMBER

Like the last room, this bedchamber is tastefully decorated. The place is nearly spotless, but you see dust on the dressing table and bed.

Arathanthus almost never sleeps here, lolling about in the temple below when he grows tired.

36. WULVERA'S STUDY

Of all the rooms you have seen so far, this one might be the most disturbing. The walls are covered with shockingly realistic paintings of snakes raping and eating (often simultaneously) various humanoids. The room looks well lived in, with a reading table and a well-stocked bookshelf on the wall. A faint reptilian stink lingers in the air.

Wulvera, leader and owner of Porphyry House, lives in this small suite of three rooms. The books on the shelves are all wretched erotica filled with tasteless encounters and shocking artwork. Chances are good that Wulvera is working in her laboratory when the party arrives here if she is not yet aware of them. Otherwise, she awaits their arrival downstairs in the temple.

37. WULVERA'S LABORATORY (EL 14)

This is an incredibly well-stocked and maintained alchemical laboratory. The floor is not carpeted here, and a 5-foot-diameter circle is carved into the floor to the northeast.

Many of the components of the alchemy lab bear minor enchantments to keep components fresh. The circle on the floor is a variant form of *teleportation circle* made *permanent*. It *teleports* any yuan-ti that stands upon it to area **46**, just before the statue of Demogorgon; it does not function for other races.

Creature: There is a 90% chance that Wulvera is present here, should the party make it this far without alerting her or raising an alarm. She becomes enraged if her laboratory is invaded, as well as a little shocked and nervous that someone could make it this far. Her first action upon meeting the party is to pour a large canister of catalyst into the dose of demon's breath she is refining, and her second is to flee by stepping onto the portal disc.

Wulvera, Female Halfblood Yuan-ti Brd2/Thrall of Demogorgon7: CR 14; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid (6 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 14d8+14 plus 2d6+2; hp 86; Init +2; Spd

30 ft.; AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 20; Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (1d6+6 plus 1 vile, *Demogorgon's Tooth*) and +14 melee (1d6+2 and poison, 2 snake bites), or +20 ranged (1d4+3, *+1 hand crossbow* with *+2 bolts*); SA *hypnosis* 1/day, *touch of fear* 3/day (DC 23), reaching touch 3/day, dual actions 2/day, *summon minor demon* 1/day, *rotting touch* 3/day, spell-like abilities, psionics, bardic music, poison (DC 18, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con); SQ bardic knowledge, halfblood features; SR 16; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +12, Will +13; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 16, Cha 25.

Skills: Alchemy +20, Bluff +16**, Concentration +11, Hide +8*, Intimidate +16**, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (local) +19, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Knowledge (religion) +21, Listen +14, Profession (madame) +12, Sense Motive +12, Spot +14. *Feats:* Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hand crossbow), Expertise, Mobility, Sacrificial Mastery (vile feat), Spring Attack, Thrall to Demon (Demogorgon) (vile feat), Willing Deformity (vile feat).

*Yuan-ti using chameleon power receive a +8 circumstance bonus to Hide checks, but Wulvera's *robe of blending* produces the same effect, only better (+15 circumstance bonus). This bonus is not factored in to the modifier above, since the item isn't always active.

**Wulvera's *circlet of persuasion* gives her a +2 competence bonus to Charisma checks and Charisma-based skill checks. This bonus is included in the skills indicated.

Hypnosis (Sp): Once per day, Wulvera can produce an effect identical to that of the *hypnotism* spell, except that it functions as a gaze attack with a range of 30 feet. The Will save DC to resist the effect is DC 24.

Touch of Fear (Sp): Three times per day, Wulvera can produce an effect identical to that of the *cause fear* spell. The DC to negate the fear is 24.

Reaching Touch (Su): Three times per day, Wulvera can cause her arms to stretch unnaturally like tentacles, providing her an extra 5 feet of reach for 1 round. This makes her total reach 10 feet.

Dual Actions (Su): Twice per day, Wulvera can take 2 full rounds worth of actions in the same round.

Summon Demon (Sp): Wulvera can summon a demon of 5 HD or less once per day. This functions as a *summon monster* spell cast by a 15th-level caster.

Rotting Touch (Sp): Three times per day, Wulvera can deal 1d6 points of temporary Constitution damage as a touch attack.

Psionics (Sp): See the *Monster Manual*, page 190, for details on yuan-ti abilities.

Halfblood Features: As a halfblood yuan-ti, Wulvera has two snakelike traits. Her scaly skin grants a +4 bonus to her natural armor, and her breasts are actually the heads and necks of rattlesnakes.

Bard Spells Known (3/5/3, base save DC = 16 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights, detect magic, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, read magic;* 1st—*charm person, cure light wounds, mage armor, stupor**; 2nd—*cat's grace, sacrificial skill**, *tongues.*

Note: If you're not using the *Book of Vile Darkness*, feel free to substitute spells from other products for the spells marked with an asterisk.

Possessions: Demogorgon's Tooth, robe of blending, dusty rose ioun stone (+1 AC), *pink and green ioun stone* (+2 Cha), *deep red ioun stone* (+2 Dex), *master ring, ring of weeping, +1 hand crossbow,* 10 *+2 hand crossbow bolts, ring of protection +2, wand of bull's strength* (3rd level, 7 charges), *wand of keen edge* (5th level, 11 charges), *circlet of persuasion,* large spider venom (10 doses), agony (5 doses), mordayn vapor (5 doses), 2,500 gp in jewelry, Porphyry House master key (opens all locks in the House).

Wulvera is a fierce, powerful, and intimidating female yuan-ti halfblood that stands 6 1/2 feet high. Her humanlike head is hairless and androgynous in features, and numerous parts of her body (particularly her head, shoulders, back, and forearms) are protected by thick green and red scales. The most obvious indication of her yuan-ti heritage, though, are her breasts, which are in fact the heads of venomous snakes. She fights with a magical scimitar called *Demogorgon's Tooth* and wears an open, diaphanous black robe that can be pulled about her body to hide her serpentine breasts and scaly skin.

Trap (EL 8): Only 2 rounds after the catalyst is added, the demon's breath in this room explodes into a noxious green

NEW DRUG: DEMON'S BREATH (MAGICAL)

Description: Despite the fact that it is extraplanar and magical in nature, demon's breath follows all the standard rules for drugs as detailed in the *Book of Vile Darkness*. Demon's breath is a faint reddish vapor that must be kept in tightly stoppered glass vials. It temporarily transforms the person who breathes its fumes into an insane half-fiend.

Type: Inhaled DC 23.

Initial Effect: User is confused for 1d3 rounds, during which time he quickly transforms into a half-fiend.

Secondary Effect: Apply the half-fiend template to the user; the template persists for 1d10+50 minutes. Spell-like abilities are granted.

Price: 10,800 gp

Alchemy DC: 35

Side Effects: Those under the effect of demon's breath become evil for the duration, and are compelled to commit violent acts such as murder, rape, arson, destruction of property, and even cannibalism. The user suffers a –20 circumstance penalty to all Charisma checks as a result. Non-evil users might need to seek atonement.

Overdose: If more than one dose is taken in a 24-hour period, the effects of the drug occur but the strain on the user's body and soul result in 1d6 points of permanent Constitution damage and 2d6 points of permanent Charisma damage.

Addiction: Extreme.

mist that fills this room for 3d6 minutes. Anyone breathing suffers the effects of the fiendish drug.

Demon's Breath Trap: CR 8; demon's breath exposure (inhaled); see "Demon's Breath" sidebar for drug effects; Fort save (DC 23) negates); Search (N/A); Disable Device (N/A).

Treasure: The alchemical equipment in this room weighs a total of 400 pounds. If it is kept together as one unit, the equipment's minor magical qualities provide a +5 competence bonus to Alchemy checks. The equipment is worth 500 gp.

Four doses of demon's breath drug rest in a rack of tightly stoppered vials on the table. If Wulvera adds a catalyst to one of them, as detailed above, one dose of drug is consumed. In addition, notes on the creation of demon's breath and its effects can be found in neat piles on one of the workbenches. If the PCs haven't been exposed to the drug before now, they learn about it here (although not about Wulvera's plan for the orgy/sacrifice).

38. WULVERA'S BEDCHAMBER

If Wulvera is not working in her laboratory and she is not yet aware of the party's presence, she is found here 75% of the time. She does not keep any valuables in this room.

In a small wooden box beneath Wulvera's bed are her notes for the orgy and sacrifice. No specific mention of the sacrifice is made in the notes, but Wulvera does gloat a bit about "her plans coming to fruition."

BENEATH PORPHYRY HOUSE

The chambers below Porphyry House are crafted without comfort in mind; there is no carpeting and illumination is spotty at best. These rooms are damp and moist, and large, fecund patches of subterranean fungus and harmless mold grows on the walls, floor, and ceiling. This fungus can be used by the *entangle* spell to trap victims.

39. STAGING CHAMBER

This large, damp, fungus-caked chamber is crudely carved. A sturdy ladder leads up to a trap door in a side chamber to the west, and several storage bins sit behind iron gates in alcoves to the north. Two more iron gates seal off passageways to the northeast and east, and to the south you see a dark, murky pool of briny water that ripples softly against a sturdy dock to which a large squat raft is moored.

Originally, Wulvera and some of her yuan-ti abomination cultists went out to gather harpies, wolverines, and even gulguthydra to be *polymorphed* into prostitutes. Lately, though, Arathanthus has been sending out a retriever to track down and petrify the needed creatures; the retriever then returns to this room with the new addition. Arathanthus allows the retriever to return to the Abyss and then uses its *break enchantment* spell-like ability to restore the creature once it has been placed in the appropriate holding cell.

The pool of water extends to the south for several thousand feet along a flooded tunnel to the coast, where it exits at sea level from a cliff face into a hidden cove a few miles away from Scuttlecove. Wulvera long ago had the entrance to the cavern hidden by an *illusory wall* (14th-level caster).

This chamber is also used to train newly *polymorphed* monsters to serve as prostitutes; it is at this time the new "employee" is given a *slave ring* by Wulvera. The new employee is then brought up into the House via the trap door to the west, which leads to area **12** of Porphyry House.

Trap Door: 3 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 30; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 30.

The alcoves to the north are used to store extra goods and food; they contain nothing of real value. One of the alcoves hides a secret door that provides access to the northern portion of the underground complex.

Secret Door: 3 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 30; Search DC 25; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 40.

Development: Normally, creatures are found in this chamber only when new prostitutes are brought in or being trained. Given the opportunity, this room is where the surviving yuan-ti gather to mount a final defense against the party.

40. HARPY CAGES (EL 9)

These cages were originally used to house animals awaiting polymorphing, but lately they've been used to house harpies. The yuan-ti are careful to *polymorph* their harpies into humanoids as soon as possible to keep them from using their captivating song, then keep them in these cages until they are needed.

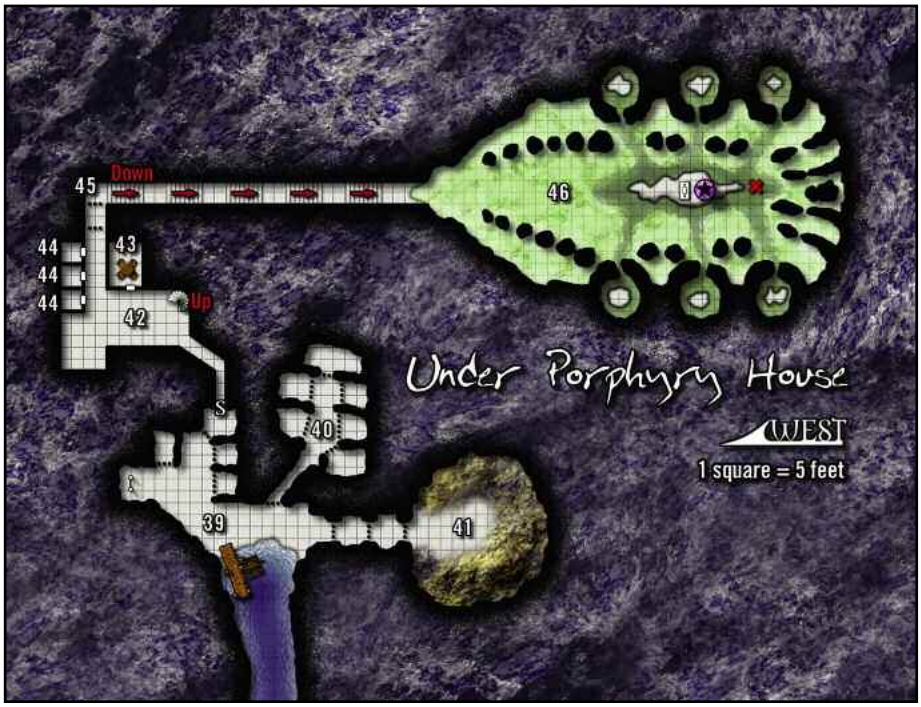
Creatures: There are currently three *polymorphed* harpies in each of the east and west cages; the northern cage is empty unless party members or other NPCs have recently been captured, in which case they are tied and locked in here. The harpies beg for release if they see non-yuan-ti, and if freed escape on their own as soon as possible to seek a reversal for their *polymorphed* forms. If the party returns them to their natural forms, the ungrateful harpies attack, possibly with surprise.

Polymorphed Harpies in Humanoid Form (15): CR 2; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 7d8; hp 31; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10 (touch 10, flat-footed 10); Atk +7/+2 melee (1d3 subdual, unarmed); AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +8, Listen +10, Perform (buffoonery, chant, epic, limericks, melody, ode, storytelling) + 9, Spot +6. *Feats:* Dodge, Flyby Attack.

41. GULGUTHYDRA PEN (EL VARIABLE)

This foul-smelling chamber reeks of rot and decay. A towering mound of rubbish, garbage, excrement, and dead bodies dominates the chamber; the mound of rot is piled nearly to the ceiling 30 feet above along the north, east, and south faces of the cave.



The three iron gates that block access to this room are all locked shut; opening them requires a lever to be thrown. The lever for each gate is 10 feet to the west of the gate in question; throwing the lever causes the gate to raise up into the ceiling.

Iron Gate: hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 24.

Trap (EL 6): This is where the yuan-ti keep their captured gulguthydras. The monsters have fairly decent Fortitude saving throws, and as a result *polymorphing* them can be frustrating. In order to make the process easier, the yuan-ti have, at great expense and risk to themselves, introduced cultures of a horribly dangerous disease into the filth in this room.

Any creature that spends more than a minute in this chamber has a chance of catching deathsong, one of the worst non-magical diseases known. A new saving throw is required each day imprisonment in this chamber persists. Deathsong is spread by contact with contaminated material or diseased victims, has an incubation period of 1 day, and can be resisted with a successful Fortitude save (DC 25).

Deathsong Trap: CR 6; deathsong disease exposure; 1d8 Str, 1d8 Dex, and 1d8 Con damage each day the disease persists; Fort save (DC 25) negates; Search (N/A); Disable Device (N/A).

Creatures: Captured gulguthydras are kept in this room until they are nearly dead from disease, at which time they are *polymorphed* into humanoids. The humanoid is then allowed to exit the room, where he or she is cured with one of the wands of *remove disease* from area **19** before being trained for work.

Diseased Gulguthydra (3): CR 12; Huge Aberration; HD 15d8–15; hp 52; Init –5; Spd 30 ft., swim 30 ft. (surface only); AC 18 (touch 3, flat-footed 18); Atk +9 melee (1d6, 2 tentacles), +7 melee (2d8, 6 bites); SA improved grab; SQ nauseating stench; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +10; Str 10, Dex 1, Con 8, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 15.

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +8 *Feats:* Iron Will, Multiattack.

Development: If the situation get desperate, Wulvera sends one of the yuan-ti abominations down here to open the three gates and let the gulguthydra out. If she has time,

NEW MAGIC ITEM: DEMOGORGON'S TOOTH

Demogorgon's Tooth is a *+2 vile scimitar*. Each time it deals damage, it deals an additional 1 point of vile damage. If it scores a critical hit, it deals 2 additional points of vile damage. In addition, whenever the sword hits a good creature, it casts a *contagion* spell on the target (Fortitude negates, DC 14).

As long as it is unsheathed, *Demogorgon's Tooth* allows its wielder to speak and understand Abyssal.

Demogorgon's Tooth bestows 1 negative level on any good or lawful creature attempting to wield it. The negative level persists as long as the weapon is in hand and disappears when it is no longer wielded. This negative level never results in actual level loss, but it cannot be overcome in any way while the weapon is wielded.

Caster Level: 6th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Thrall to Demon (Demogorgon), *vile lance, contagion; Market Price:* 54,815 gp; *Weight:* 4 lb.

she has the abomination use the *wand of restoration* from area **19** to revitalize the gulguthydras, although this is a truly desperate gambit that might cost the life of the abomination cleric ordered to do so.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award 20% less experience for defeating the gulguthydras if they're diseased when fought. The disease has ravaged the creatures' bodies, and they're much easier to vanquish in such a state.

42. GUARDROOM (EL 10)

On days when Arathanthus does not need it to hunt down more "employees," the demon's retriever minion lurks in this room, guarding it from intrusion by any non-yuan-ti.

Creature: The retriever lurks in the southwest corner of the room, patient and quiet, and attacks any who come within its field of view with its eye beams.

Retriever: hp 61; *Monster Manual* 41–43.

43. INTERROGATION CHAMBER

Wulvera uses this room to interrogate prisoners. She has either Wilarue, Arathanthus (in humanoid form), or a pair of the yuan-ti cleric abominations nearby during these sessions. The three cabinets on the north walls are well stocked with torture implements, but otherwise there is nothing of interest in this room. Extremely troublesome captives are taken to the torture chamber (area **26**).

44. CLERIC CELLS (EL VARIABLE)

Each of these three rooms is empty save for a crude mat of straw and some disturbing fetishes and unholy symbols and runes scratched onto the walls.

Creatures (EL 11 or 14): One of the three yuan-ti abomination clerics that serve Wulvera live in each of these rooms. The clerics are not interested in displays of wealth and power and are content with their cells. Unless Porphyry House is on alert, the clerics are here, praying, sleeping, or constructing fetishes to hang in the Temple.

The encounter level for one cultist is EL 11, but encountering all three cultists together raises the EL to 14.

Porphyry House High Cultist, Yuan-ti Abomination Clr4: CR 11; Large Monstrous Humanoid (9 ft. long); HD 13d8+65; hp 123 each; Init +6; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 31, touch 11, flat-footed 29; Atk +18/+13/+8 melee (2d4+6/crit 15–20, *+1 keen falchion*) or +16/+11/+6 ranged (2d6+5, *+1 huge mighty composite longbow* [*+4 Str*] with *+1 huge arrows*); SA spell-like abilities, psionics, spells, improved grab, constrict 1d6+7, rebuke/command undead; SR 16; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +9, Will +17; Str 21, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 24, Cha 14.

Skills: Concentration +17, Hide +10*, Knowledge (religion) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +18, Scry +11, Spellcraft +11, Spot +18. *Feats:* Alertness, Blind-Fight, Dodge, Improved Critical (falchion), Improved Initiative, Thrall to Demon (Demogorgon) (vile feat).

*Yuan-ti using *chameleon power* receive a +8 circumstance bonus to Hide checks.

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/6/5, base save DC = 17 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, guidance* ×2, *slash tongue** ×2; 1st—*command, cure light wounds* ×2, *demonflesh*†, divine favor, sacrificial skill**; 2nd—*blindness/deafness*†, *bull's strength, darkbolt**, *hold person, wither limb**.

Note: If you're not using the *Book of Vile Darkness,* feel free to substitute spells from other products for the spells marked with an asterisk.

†Domain Spell. *Domains:* Corruption (may ignore the hardness of an attacked object once per day), Demonic (gains +1 divine bonus on attack and damage rolls when fighting unarmed)

Possessions: +2 spiked scale mail, +2 large steel shield, +1 keen falchion, +1 huge mighty composite longbow [*+4 Str*] with 20 *+1 arrows, gauntlets of ogre power, potion of cure serious wounds, potion of endurance, potion of cure moderate wounds* ×2.

Development: With a successful Search check (DC 25), the PCs find Wulvera's instructions to the three clerics for the roll they are to play in the upcoming orgy and sacrifice hidden in a small, locked iron box in a crevice in the wall. The notes also detail the outcome of the ritual and what the Demogorgon worshipers can expect after the ritual is complete. Much mention is made of Demogorgon and the glory he will bestow on the cultists when the revelers are slain and the city is subsequently transformed. At this point, nearly all the information in the "Background" section of the adventure concerning the ritual and Wulvera's plans can be revealed to the PCs.

45. GATES AND STAIRS

The two portcullises here can be opened by turning a winch; one is located on either side so it is impossible to be locked in. The winches can be locked with the Porphyry House master key held by Wulvera; these are amazing locks (DC 40 to pick). Normally, both of the gates are left up and open.

Portcullis: 6 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 180; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 40.

The hallway beyond descends deep underground. The stairs are horribly slippery and require a successful Balance check (DC 20) to navigate for creatures without a natural Climb speed. Wulvera has two of her abomination cultists carry her down these stairs, otherwise she transforms into a snake to navigate them. Failure indicates that character slips and falls down the stairs to the next landing, taking 2d6 points of damage in the process.

46. TEMPLE OF DEMOGORGON (EL VARIABLE)

This massive chamber chills the heart. The cavern has been carved out to roughly mimic a huge underground cathedral. Natural rock columns supporting the roof, as well as the walls and ceiling, are inlaid with sparkling

porphyry tiles. The walls are festooned with dirty, crude fetishes made of bone and bits of flesh and hair. The place is lit by guttering *continual flames* of sickening mauve near the ceiling. The floor is completely hidden by thick, algae-choked water that ripples from below in a disturbing manner. A low island in the center of the room is dominated by a huge porphyry statue of a terrifying, tentacled, two-headed monster looming over an altar caked with blood and slowly drying entrails.

The slimy water in this massive chamber is about 3 feet deep for the most part. Characters who do not possess a natural swim speed suffer a –4 penalty to their Dexterity while being forced to wade in the slippery water, and they must make a Balance check each round (DC 20) to maintain their footing. Additionally, the eastern portion of the room holds several deeper sections of water (as indicated on the map); these areas drop suddenly to a depth of 50 feet. A wading character can avoid falling into one of these watery crevices by making a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 15). This water is quite foul and rancid; anyone drinking it or immersed in it must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 16) or contract a case of blinding sickness (detailed on page 75 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). In addition, the water is so thick with rotten algae that visibility in it is reduced to 0 feet. Creatures hidden in the water gain a +8 circumstance bonus to Hide checks made against creatures out of the water.

This entire chamber is warded by an *unhallow* spell with a *dispel magic* tied to it placed by Arathanthus; all enemies of the cult of Demogorgon who enter the area are targeted by an *area dispel* effect (12th caster level).

The six side chambers each contain a small island of rotting fungus and stinking soil. These islands are covered with steaming, stinking mushrooms and oily sheets of mold. These disgusting fungi are native to the Abyss, and if eaten are deadly poisonous (with identical effects to dark reaver powder, detailed on page 80 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Wulvera harvested these on the Abyss and successfully transplanted them here; they comprise the main ingredients of demon's breath.

Creatures: If Porphyry House is not on alert, only Arathanthus is present in this room. He hides underwater and attacks with surprise.

If Porphyry House is on alert, however, this encounter is much more dangerous. Wulvera waits here on the central island along with her three yuan-ti abomination clerics. Arathanthus lurks in the water nearby, and Wilarue the corpse succubus lurks high above on a narrow ledge. When the party enters, Wulvera demands their surrender; if they refuse, the yuan-ti and demons unleash the full power of their spells and ranged attacks on the party.

In addition, the waters of this chamber are infested with hundreds of tiny fiendish water moccasins. These snakes should be little more than a nuisance to a high-level party unless they get in a lucky bite. Since up to sixteen snakes can attack a single Medium-size target at once, chances are at least one of them lands a bite. The snakes do not leave the water, though, so anyone standing on the various islands in the room are safe from them.

- **Arathanthus, Orlath Demon:** hp 112; see the appendix at the end of the adventure. **EL 14**
- **Wulvera:** hp 86; see area **37**. **EL 14**
- **Wilarue:** hp 39; see area **27**. **EL 10**
- **Porphyry House High Cultists (3):** hp 123 each; see area **44**. **EL 11 each**
- **Fiendish Water Moccasins (340):** CR 1; Tiny Outsider; HD 1/2d8; hp 1; Init +3; Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.; AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 14; Atk +5 melee (poison, bite); Face/Reach 2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./0ft. SA poison (DC 11, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con), smite good (+1 damage); SQ scent, darkvision 60 ft., cold and fire resistance 5; SR 2; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Balance +11, Climb +12, Hide +18 (+26 in the slimy water), Listen +8, Spot +8. *Feats:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

Trap (EL 4): A *glyph of warding* protects a hidden chest filled with treasure here.

Glyph of Warding: CR 4; *contagion* (5th level), Fort save (DC 14) negates; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

Treasure: Each of the fungus islands in the six side chambers holds 3d4 doses of fungus; each dose is identical to a dose of dark reaver powder as is (and could fetch 300 gp per dose). Once the fungus dries, though (this takes only a day), it becomes inert and useless.

In addition to the large amounts of magic equipment owned by the inhabitants of this room, the vast bulk of Porphyry House's treasure can be found here. It is hidden in a large waterproof chest buried in the slime deep underwater at the location indicated on the map by the "X." Discovering this chest should be difficult, requiring a Search check (DC 35) made on that square by someone swimming near the base of the pool (which is 30 feet deep here), possibly while being swarmed by fiendish water moccasins. If discovered, the chest proves to be trapped and locked. The lock is an amazing, rust proof lock (DC 40), and the trap is detailed above.

Iron-bound Chest: 3 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 15; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 40.

Inside the chest can be found 20,000 sp, 7,000 gp, 650 pp, 20 gems worth a total value of 4,500 gp, demon's breath (6 doses), a *wand of remove disease*, a *wand of continual flame*, a *wand of cure moderate wounds*, and a *staff of life* (5 charges left). The wands are all fully charged, while the *staff of life* can be used by most of Wulvera's minions to restore to life any important yuan-ti who are killed, allowing the cultists to recover quickly from repeated assaults.

Development: If Wulvera is able to gather all of her minions in this room, they present a formidable force that can easily squash a 10th-level party—even one with the assistance of a half-fiend nymph. A wise party whittles away at Wulvera's allies and defenses before trying to confront her in this final chamber.

Ad-Hoc XP Award: Award 125% the regular experience points for this encounter due to the presence of the tainted water, the *unhallow* spell, and the water moccasins.

CONCLUSION

If the party doesn't manage to disrupt the Porphyry House in time, Wulvera goes through with her sacrifice to Demogorgon. If she enhances the demon's breath drug with the sacrificial orgy, the enhanced drug's vapors spread out of Porphyry House at a rate of 50 feet per minute. At this rate, the fumes extend to their maximum radius of one mile in a little over an hour and a half. The fumes persist as long as the temple to Demogorgon remains consecrated, and anyone in this region must make a Fortitude saving throw once per minute against the demon's breath or be transformed into an evil half-fiend. In the space of only a few hours, Scuttlecove is transformed into a living nightmare. At about this time, the ur-priests awaken from their torpor and try to stop the mess, but they are quickly overwhelmed by a legion of enraged half-fiends and torn limb from limb. Their remains are mounted on the Plaza of Hanging Ruin.

Over the next several weeks, chaos reigns. Eventually, Wulvera emerges as the new ruler of Scuttlecove, transformed into a full-fledged demon rather than a half-fiend. Before long, she organizes the demons of Scuttlecove into a terrible force, using the strength of her will and her boundless capacity to ruin any who would refuse her call. The sea lanes become a killing realm, stalked by demonic pirates who sink ships not for treasure but simply for the glory of spreading pain and misery. The lucky ones drown. The unlucky ones are captured and returned to Scuttlecove, where they quickly succumb and join the demon army.

Such a situation might make an interesting plotline for a high-level party to try to rectify, but for our heroes, their best bet is to stop Wulvera from achieving this goal beforehand. Killing Wulvera is the best way to do this, although even then, one of her surviving minions might take up her cause. Destroying her groves of demonic fungi in the Temple of Demogorgon also delays the sacrifice, perhaps by as much as five years (it takes ages to cultivate and grow the Abyssal fungi). Killing Arathanthus or a number of the yuan-ti also slows the process down. The best answer lies in achieving a combination of the above goals.

One particularly interesting way to deal with the Porphyry House could be to find a way to expose the *polymorphing* scam to the public of Scuttlecove. A charismatic party could probably enrage the town enough that they would assault Porphyry House and raze it to the ground. The party would then have to penetrate the still-standing dungeons of the House to clean up the surviving cultists, but in the end, this would likely be the most final way to stop Wulvera's plans.

Assuming the party manages to stop the yuan-ti, Kedward Bone lives up to his end of the bargain and rewards them with free drugs, magic items, or spells. Each character gains approximately 6,000 gp in rewards of her own choosing. Additionally, Kedward pays full price (rather than half price) for any doses of demon's breath or abyssal fungus they secure.

Finally, although Tyralandi might have proven time and time again to be a valuable ally in the battle against Porphyry House, remember that in the end she's still a Thrall of Graz'zt, and Graz'zt thrives on betrayals. If the party manages to make it through the final encounter without much of a problem, Tyralandi attacks them with her spells the instant combat is over, taking full advantage of her spell betrayal ability. Otherwise, she hangs around just long enough to collect her share of the loot. If any of the party members seems to have taken a liking to her, she might invite them to become Thralls of Graz'zt. If not, she parts ways with the party on apparently amicable terms, only to

track them over the next several days and assault them one by one to reclaim the treasures of Porphyry House for her own. She can turn into a memorable recurring villain in your campaign, and in the long run, might prove to be more dangerous than anything Porphyry House contained. Ω

James says, "I can't take all the credit for the demented weirdness in this adventure. I suppose I have my grandparents to thank for a lot of it. My grandma introduced me to Dean Koontz, Clive Barker, and Stephen King (among others), and Grandpa hooked me up with stacks of old horror comic books and good old H.P. Lovecraft. Thanks, Grandma and Grandpa! All those spooky books paid off!"

APPENDIX: NEW MONSTER

Orlath (Demon)
Large Outsider (Chaos, Evil)
Hit Dice: 12d8+36 (90 hp)
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 30 ft.
AC: 22 (–1 size, +3 Dex, +10 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 19
Attacks: 2 bites +15 melee, 12 scimitars +8 melee
Damage: Bite 2d6+4, scimitar 1d6+2 plus 1 vile
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Call retriever, spell-like abilities, vile gaze
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 20/+2, truesight, x-ray vision, immune to enchantment spells, disease, and poison, fire resistance 20, telepathy, SR 22
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +10
Abilities: Str 19, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 18
Skills: Climb +12, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +17, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (architecture/engineering) +16, Knowledge (nobility/royalty) +16, Listen +11, Scry +15, Search +13, Sense Motive +15, Spellcraft +13, Spot +11
Feats: Improved Critical (scimitar), Multidexterity, Multiweapon Fighting, Vile Martial Strike (scimitar) (vile feat)

Climate/Terrain: Any underground
Organization: Solitary or hunt (orlath plus 1 retriever and 1d3 succubi)
Challenge Rating: 14
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: 13–24 HD (Huge), 25–36 HD (Gargantuan)

Legend holds that Demogorgon killed a lesser demon lord of reptiles long ago by biting it. Several teeth dislodged and gestated inside the dead demon's carcass for a century, after which the ripe body split and gave birth to the first of the orlaths.

The orlath is a huge, vile, two-headed serpentine demon with baboon-like heads and a dozen humanoid arms that protrude from where the demon snake's two necks converge in one long, almost sluglike body. Each of these arms wields a wickedly curved sword.

The orlath's ability to assume humanoid form combined with its silver tongue and extensive knowledge of military defenses and nobility make it an excellent spy or double agent.

Orlaths speak Abyssal, Celestial, and Draconic.

COMBAT

The orlath is a devastating force in combat, leading with twin bite attacks and slashing away at anything that remains standing with its scimitars. Wounds caused by these scimitars are particularly dismaying and horrifying in their placement and cut; each time the orlath damages someone with a scimitar it deals an additional 1 point of vile damage. Vile damage can be cured magically only on *consecrated* or *hallowed* ground.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*blasphemy, break enchantment, deeper darkness, desecrate, detect secret doors, detect thoughts, discern lie, dispel magic, dispel good, locate object, locate creature, magic circle against good, sending, shapechange* (humanoid form only), *teleport without error* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *unhallow, unholy blight*; 3/day—*find the path, fly, move earth, prying eyes, stone shape*; 1/day—*demand, disintegrate, greater scrying*. Caster level 12th; save DC = 18+ spell level.

Vile Gaze (Su): Any nonevil creature within 30 feet of an orlath who meets the creature's hateful gaze must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 18) or take 2 points of vile Charisma damage. A character drained to 0 Charisma by this gaze is transformed into a dretch under the control of the orlath. Orlaths are immune to their own gaze attacks and to those of others of their kind, and they can suppress or activate the effects of this gaze as a free action.

Call Retriever (Su): Once per day, an orlath can call a retriever to its location. This takes the orlath a full minute of concentration, but once the retriever arrives, it is under the complete control of the orlath and remains until it is either killed or dismissed by the orlath. The orlath can only maintain one called retriever at a time with this ability.

Truesight (Su): The orlath's left head continuously sees as if under the effects of *true seeing*.

X-Ray Vision (Su): The orlath's right head has constant x-ray vision, as if it were wearing a *ring of x-ray vision*, except without the exhaustion effect normally associated with the ring.

Telepathy (Su): An orlath can communicate telepathically with any creature within 250 feet that has a language.

d20 system

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Polyhedron

November 2002

RPGA NETWORK

Polyhedron 154

IMPROVED INITIATIVE:

d20 Innovation

Alert Factor

by Mike Mearls
illustration by Stan Shaw

THE SOUND OF A WOODEN DOOR SPLINTERING INTO PIECES ECHOED DOWN THE COLD, STONE CORRIDOR. Soon after, shouted battle cries and the death screams of orc warriors resonated through the dungeon. Barrashka looked up from the card game with a snort.

"Sounds like Gedra's boys are getting a sound kicking," the orc warrior snarled.

"Shouldn't we go help 'em?" asked Blorg, his beady eyes peeking over the poker hand that he held, as usual, card faces outward.

Barrashka paused for a moment to consider the ogre's straight flush before glaring at the hulking brute.

"You're new here, kid. You didn't even know how to hold your cards right, so I'm going to go easy on you this time. The big boss said we stay here, play cards, and wait until those two humans, the dwarf with the big hammer, and the robed elf show up. Then we fight them. He didn't say nothing about helping out Gedra."

"But if we ganged up on them..."

"He didn't say nothing about it. Now if you're done asking stupid questions, I fold," the orc said as he tossed his cards on the table.

Blorg frowned as the other orcs followed suit. He didn't know what was worse, watching everyone fold every time he got a half-decent hand or the crummy pay this job netted him.

Dungeons are a staple of fantasy gaming because of their modular nature. The dungeon map serves as a sort of flow chart, allowing GMs to see at a glance where the PCs are in an adventure, where they have been, and what lies ahead. This can lead to some rather strange situations. If a fight breaks out in room 1, do the monsters in room 2 sit there and ignore the noise? And if the monsters in room 2 actually do something, what about the monsters in room 3? Any attempt to build a series of relationships that links actions in one room to a response in another can lead to a tangled web of events and possibilities.

Enter Alert Factor. A dungeon's Alert Factor is a numerical measure of the preparation and activity in a dungeon room. Making lots of noise, casting a spell, or otherwise causing a disturbance in a dungeon room causes the Alert Factor of the area around it to rise, reflecting the preparations and actions of the dungeon's inhabitants. Rather than build a complex series of relationships between encounter areas, Alert Factor allows you to create a standardized list of actions that cause changes to a dungeon's status and apply those changes to each room quickly and easily.

Alert Factor was originally presented in Fiery Dragon Productions' *To Stand on Hallowed Ground* and was subsequently used in FDP's *The Giant's Skull*. Both adventures represent the type of scenario that best utilizes Alert Factor—scenarios that require stealth or set the PCs against an organized, military encampment.

That said, any type of dungeon benefits from a dose of Alert Factor. The primary strength of this system lies in the flexible, dynamic environments it allows you to build. A dungeon becomes a much more dangerous environment if one wrong step by the PCs calls a horde of monsters down upon them. Alert Factor forces the PCs to consider their actions more carefully and apply better tactics than simple charges backed up with volleys of *fireballs* and *cones of cold*. If such actions alert the entire dungeon to their presence, the PCs now must fight every monster in the dungeon at once, rather than a room at a time.

Alert Factor is an excellent tool when you want to create a scenario that involves stealth or trickery. The threat of an overpowering assault forces PCs to proceed through an adventure with caution, vigilant against making too much noise and drawing the enemy upon them. Alert Factor also rewards clever play. By using a diversion, the PCs can cause a temple's guards to charge from their posts to investigate a loud noise or the sounds of battle, clearing the path for a quick advance into the inner sanctum. Best of all, the options and tactical concerns Alert Factor introduces into an adventure come with a minimum of effort.

Using Alert Factor

Alert Factor is a numerical rating of a dungeon inhabitants' preparation and activity. Each room or region of a

Alert Factor system © 2002. Fiery Dragon Productions.

dungeon has a separate Alert Factor rating. A high Alert Factor indicates the monsters are ready for action or have taken steps to repel invaders. A low Alert Factor shows that the monsters are unaware of attackers. They continue with their daily routine and are unprepared for an assault.

Starting Alert Factor

When designing a dungeon, use the Alert Factor table to judge the starting rating for different encounter areas. For example, a guardroom positioned near the dungeon entrance may have an Alert Factor of 10, reflecting the guards' awareness and preparation for combat. On the other hand, a watch post near the rear of a dungeon or positioned at a rarely used entrance may have an Alert Factor of 0, as the warriors stationed there do not expect trouble. Generally speaking, no area should begin with an Alert Factor of 15 or above. Such a level of readiness wastes spells and is too stressful to maintain for long stretches of time. You don't need to assign a rating to every room. Just focus on the ones that are integral to the dungeon's defenses.

Increasing Alert Factor

Depending on the character's actions, the Alert Factor of a dungeon changes over time. Generally speaking, Alert Factor modifiers break down into two types, major events and minor events.

Major events are loud noises or obvious signs that the dungeon complex is under attack. The sound of combat, a loud explosion, or a runner sent to warn areas of the dungeon of approaching intruders all serve as major events. A major event causes a room's Alert Factor to increase by at least 5 points.

Minor events are noises that do not necessarily indicate combat, such as a loud argument or out of the ordinary events that draw the dungeon inhabitants' attention. For example, a rogue disguised as an orc talks his way past the guard but arouses some suspicion, as none of the guards recognize him. Even with a successful Bluff check, the rogue's appearance deviates from the dungeon's normal routine and prompts the guards to be a bit more vigilant. Minor events increase a room's Alert Factor by 5 or less.

The events that alter Alert Factor should be tailored to the location. For example, in a temple that serves as a front for a diabolical cult, a cleric wearing a holy symbol to a good deity increases the area's Alert Factor, as the guards suspect the interlopers must be

Alert Factor	Status
0–4	Monsters continue with business as usual. They sense nothing amiss and go through their normal routine.
5–9	The room's inhabitants are edgy and on alert.
10-14	The room's inhabitants prepare weapons and expect an attack.
15-19	The dungeon is in full alert. Warriors and other combatants take proactive steps to repel invaders, such as erecting barri cades in hallways, preparing ambushes, and so on.
20+	Complete combat footing. The inhabitants expect an attack within moments and stand ready to repel invaders.

Starting Alert Factor	Example
0–4	Typical dungeon room. Inattentive or bored guards. Kitchen, living area, or non-military area.
5 - 9	Typical guard areas. Guards stationed near a chief, important officer, treasury, or other valuable target. Living quarters for elite guards, hunters, or other well-trained units.
10 - 14	Front-line guard room. Elite sentries. Guards positioned in a watchtower.

Alert Factor Action	Modifier
Alarm horn or bell	+10
Warning of attack from messenger	+10
Sounds of a fight	+5
Loud spell (*fireball*, *lightning bolt*)	+5
Loud, unfamiliar voices	+2
Out of place or odd visitor	+2

up to no good (or, in this case, up to good). The general character of an area should increase or decrease the affect events have on Alert Factor. A highly militarized tribe of hobgoblins aggressively responds to signs of trouble, while a gang of lazy, thickheaded ogres pay little mind to even the most obvious warning signs. As a rule of thumb, increase any Alert Factor modifier by +2 to +5 if the dungeon is dominated by lawful or aggressive creatures. Reduce the modifiers by -2 to -5 if the area is inhabited by chaotic or lazy creatures.

In order for an area's Alert Factor to change, its inhabitants must either hear or be aware of the factors that can modify it. To add a random touch to Alert Factor, use the rules presented under the Listen skill to determine if the monsters in a particular room hear a noise. Make this check each round the party makes a noise the monsters may hear. Otherwise, assume the monsters roll a 10 on their check and determine in advance if noise in a room can affect the Alert Factor in surrounding areas.

Decreasing Alert Factor

Over time, an area's Alert Factor drops as the threat of battle passes and life returns to normal. For every 30 minutes after an area's Alert Factor increases, reduce its Alert Factor by 1 to a minimum of its starting rating. As time passes without an attack, the guards lose their edge and grow bored. Eventually, the area's normal routine swings back into motion.

Effects of Alert Factor

Monsters gain a competence bonus or penalty on their Listen, Sense Motive, and Spot checks based on their current Alert Factor. These modifiers also apply to initiative, reflecting the preparation of the dungeon's inhabitants. They expect trouble and are ready to react to it.

Alert Factor	Competence Modifier
0-4	-2
5-9	+0
10-14	+1
15-19	+2
20+	+4

In addition to gaining benefits or penalties to their skills, a dungeon's inhabitants cast spells, prepare weapons and armor, and ready themselves for combat as Alert Factor climbs.

Other Effects of Alert Factor

In addition to preparing for battle, the inhabitants of a dungeon move forward to support defenders, prepare ambushes, and take proactive measures to repel intruders. The following list covers some actions monsters may take as Alert Factor rises.

Creatures stationed in the rear areas of a dungeon move forward to attack. After taking time to don armor and ready weapons, they run forward to man guard positions.

Spellcasters use *sending* and similar magic to contact patrols, hunting parties, or allies, calling them to the dungeon to aid in its defense.

Soldiers move to prepare flanking actions against attackers.

The monsters arm traps in well-traveled areas where a tripwire or pit trap would normally pose too much of a danger to the dungeon's inhabitants.

A diabolical villain grabs a captured peasant to use as a hostage if the PCs penetrate his lair.

As you can see, Alert Factor covers a wide range of actions. Put yourself in the shoes of your local arch-villain and think about what actions your underlings would take to prepare for an attack.

Practical Concerns

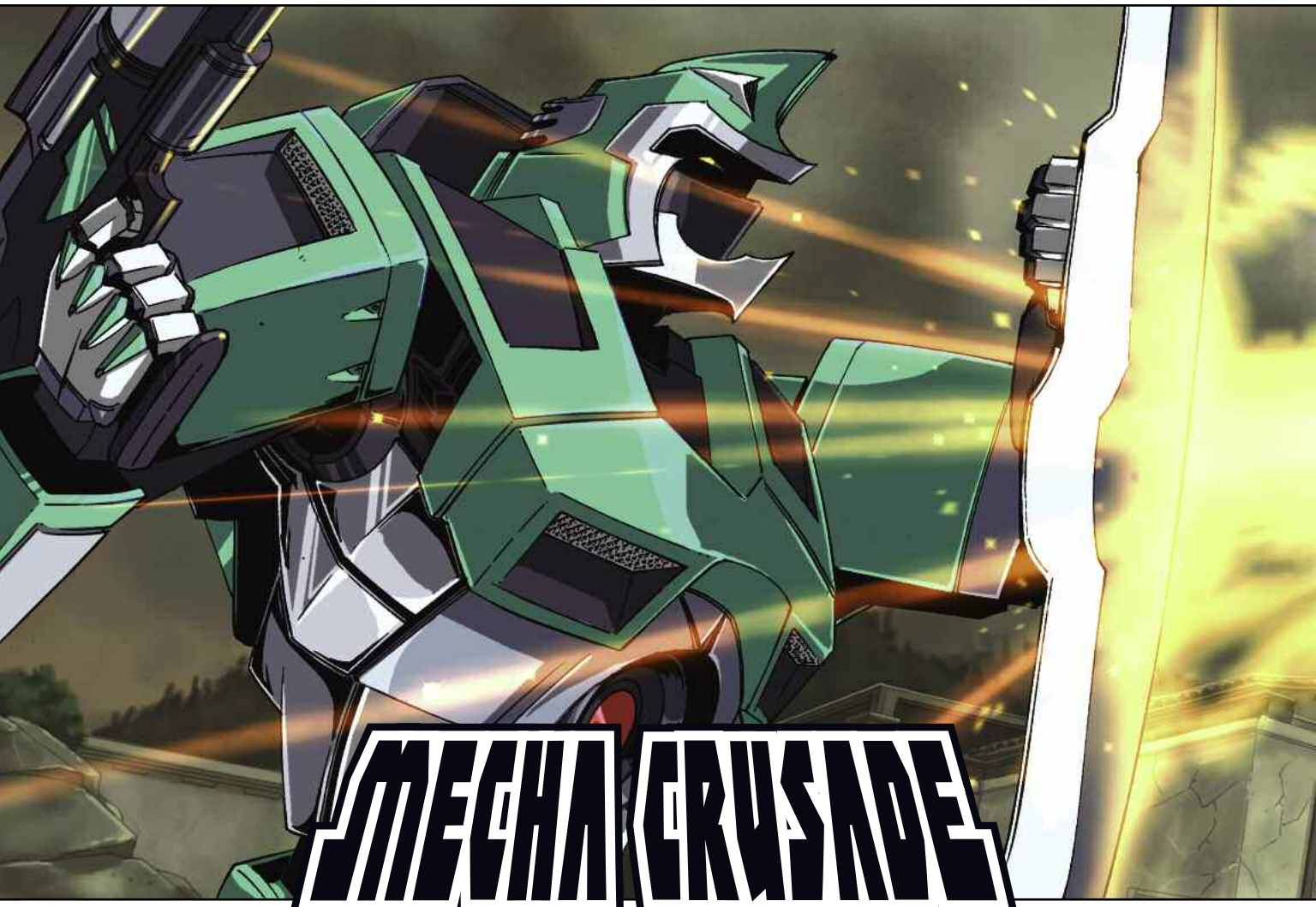
You can take a few simple steps to make this system very easy to implement and manage.

Use a sheet of paper to construct an Alert Factor chart. List each room and its starting Alert Factor. As the characters take actions, cast spells, and engage in fights, note changes to Alert Factor on your sheet.

When writing up the notes for a dungeon room or area, make notes within the room's description about changes due to Alert Factor. For instance, if the monsters in room 19 move to room 6 when their Alert Factor rises above 10, note that in room 6's description. When the PCs reach that area, you need only glance at your worksheet to modify the room's description. In addition, note in room 19 that on an Alert Factor of 10 or higher, the monsters are no longer there.

Alert Factor	Status
0-4	Combatants do not have weapons, armor, or shields worn or ready. Spellcasters have no spells pre-cast.
5-9	Combatants wear armor and carry shields, but keep weapons sheathed. Spellcasters use any defensive or otherwise useful spells with a duration of at least 4 hours.
10-14	Combatants wear armor and carry shields, but keep weapons sheathed. Crossbows are kept loaded. Spellcasters use any defensive or otherwise useful spells with a duration of at least 1 hour.
15-19	Combatants wear armor and carry shields, but keep weapons sheathed. Crossbows are kept loaded. All monsters take advantage of available cover and move into ambush positions, if applicable. Spellcasters use any defensive or otherwise useful spells with a duration of at least 30 minutes.
20+	Combatants wear armor, carry shields, and keep weapons readied. Crossbows are kept loaded. All monsters take advantage of available cover and move into ambush positions, if appli cable. All creatures capable of a range attack have an action readied to fire at anyone entering their room or area or have actions readied to brace spears or polearms against chargers. Spellcasters use all defensive and otherwise useful spells.

If the creatures in a given room change their tactics or positions but remain in that room, note that in the room description. This allows you to glance at your worksheet and pick out which set of notes to work from.



Mecha Crusade

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This Polyhedron d20 System Mini-Game requires the d20 Modern rulebook to play. Polyhedron Mini-Games adapt the standard D&D or d20 Modern rules and conventions to nonstandard settings and genres. Unless specifically noted in the text, this Mini-Game follows the core d20 Modern rules. If you know how to play d20 Modern, you'll pick up the rules of this game in moments.

Mecha Crusade utilizes game mechanics developed for the new Dungeons & Dragons game by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison and is based on the d20 Modern *Roleplaying Game*, by Bill Slavicsek, Jeff Grubb, Rich Redman, and Charles Ryan. This Wizards of the Coast game contains no Open Game Content.

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Based on the original Dungeons & Dragons game by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

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MECHA CRUSADE

Imagine you could put on a massive suit made of bullet-proof metal that multiplied your strength by ten. Add a laser cannon on your shoulder and jet thrusters on your boots. Take a sword made of pure energy and a visor that sees through walls. All of a sudden, you're a completely different person. That's the promise of the *Mecha Crusade* d20 System Mini-Game: transformation into a walking, talking, high-tech giant.

In this game, inspired by Japanese comic books and cartoons about giant suits of powered armor, you get to play with the big toys. You'll have a Strength score of 40. You'll fly faster than a jet fighter. Every time you fire your laser cannon, a cascade of six-sided dice will hit the gaming table.

Your friends have powered armor like yours, and you can transform your suits to form a truly immense robot capable of leveling cities. But your enemies have armor suits, too.

Mecha Crusade requires the *d20 Modern roleplaying game* to play.

The Mecha Genre

Mecha is a science fiction genre, mostly Japanese, that tells stories about people who pilot giant suits of powered armor. Often the armor sports sci-fi weaponry and can transform itself, adding and subtracting weapons and other features to fit the task at hand. Occasionally there'll be a robot brain, not a human pilot, at the center of the armor suit. But usually in the head or chest of the mecha suit is a pilot in a jumpsuit, operating complicated controls that make the mecha walk, talk, and fight.

You've probably seen some Japanese mecha cartoons: *Mobile Suit Gundam*, *Gundam Wing*, *Voltron*, *Robotech*, and *Heavy Gear* are all good examples of mecha. *Star Blazers* has some mecha aspects, and the *Transformers* cartoon is basically mecha with robots rather than human pilots.

High-tech robot suits are hardly unique to Japanese comic books and cartoons. The *Iron Man* comic book tells the tale of a wealthy industrialist wearing high-tech armor, for example. Like a lot of science fiction, the mecha

genre extends an existing trend into the future. As long as there's been violence, there's been the urge to protect oneself against it. Cavemen covered themselves in animal hides, centurions carried shields, and knights wore, well, shining armor. In the 19th century, naval architects started putting sheets of metal on ship hulls. In the 20th century, inventors wrapped a cannon in armor plating and put it on tank treads. The mecha genre brings the knight in shining armor and the Sherman tank crew into the future. Your lance is made of pure plasma, and your armor is made of megatanium, but you are absolutely the culmination of that warrior tradition.

Another trope of the mecha genre is the mix of man and machine. Your character will spend much of his time in his mecha suit—so much so that you might as well come with a special character sheet for when you're in your mecha. Success on the battlefield depends on making both machine and man function at their best. When your character talks to or fights another mecha, he can't be sure who—if anyone—is inside the matrix of fiber-optic cable, powerful servomotors, and ultradense armor plating.

Finally, because most mecha comes from Japanese anime cartoons, *Mecha Crusade* has many of the same genre conventions as anime. The heroes are generally young, often still in high school. There's a lot of attention paid to romance and relationships—a juxtaposition that RPG writer Ken Hite once called "Dear Diary: I saved the world today, and Rick likes me!"

What's In the Game

Mecha Crusade has everything you need to start your own mecha-based adventures.

Chapter 1: Characters. All of the basic and advanced classes described in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* are at your disposal, and we introduce six new ones: The mecha ace, mecha shock trooper, cyborg, sleeper agent, wing captain, and weapons designer. Likewise, the feats and skills from *d20 Modern* function normally, but *Mecha Crusade* offers a few new ways to use your skills and a smattering of new feats.

Chapter 2: Building a Mecha. This is the heart of the *Mecha Crusade* rules, a system for building your own mechas, from small scout mechas loaded with chameleon skin and stealth technology to armored leviathans so massive that the earth shudders with their every step. By combining different mecha parts, you can create the mecha of your dreams—provided your requisition budget can handle it.

Chapter 3: Running *Mecha Crusade*. This chapter covers special situations, mostly new combat rules important to mechas. Rules for homing missiles, flying mechas, and combining mechas into immense metabots are included here. There's also enough high-tech personal weaponry—laser pistols and plasma rifles, for example—to enable adventures in which your characters have no access to mechas.

Chapter 4: The Mecha Crusade Crusade. This example campaign setting features the outbreak of war between Earth and its far-flung solar system colonies. An increasingly authoritarian world government, responding to ecological and political crises, demands more and more from thriving settlements on the Moon, Mars, the Asteroid Belt, and Jupiter's moons. The colonists rebel against what they see as heavy-handed repression, and everyone mobilizes for war. Characters represent the best and brightest of either side in the conflict—or they can be mercenary mecha pilots, offering their services to the highest-bidding faction. Sample mechas are included. This chapter also discusses some more off-beat approaches to mecha campaigns.

The d20 Modern Rules

If a particular topic isn't covered, simply refer to the newly released *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*. Because we wanted to cram as much mecha-specific stuff in here as possible, we've intentionally given only a light treatment of other topics, and we've avoided restating rules covered there. The *d20 Modern* rules should have the answers to anything left unstated or unclear in *Mecha Crusade*.

In particular, this game wouldn't exist without the authors of *d20 Modern:* Bill Slavicsek, Jeff Grubb, Rich Redman, and Charles Ryan. They've created a set of rules that easily transformed into the game you're reading now.

Prepare for Launch

If you're a player new to *Mecha Crusade*, simply create a character according to the rules in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*, paying attention to the feats and skills described in Chapter 1 of this game. In particular, you'll want to take the Mecha Operation feat; moving and fighting in a Mecha can be frustrating without it.

Your Gamemaster (GM) will give you a budget in build points (bp) for your first mecha. Read Chapter 2 as you construct your mecha. Then skim the topics covered in Chapter 3 and you're ready to play!

CHAPTER ONE: CHARACTERS

Mecha pilots are as diverse as the machines they control. ***Some are grizzled military veterans, others are brilliant scientists, and still others are highly trained teenagers who balance normal studies with a secret life as a mecha pilot.***

The six basic hero classes and the twelve advanced classes presented in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* are all appropriate for *Mecha Crusade*. Specifically, the standard game's advanced classes look like this in the futuristic example setting, which posits a war between Earth and her solar colonies:

Soldier: Earth has a large standing army of "peacekeepers," and each of the colonies has a smaller security force.

Martial Artist: Various schools of hand-to-hand combat are as common in the future as they are today.

Gunslinger: In the future, handguns are somewhat less important for personal protection than they are today. Still, many criminal syndicates and police forces, both on Earth and among the colonies, employ Gunslingers.

Infiltrator: Corporate espionage is rampant in 2053, so Infiltrators are common. Many seek to steal plans for new mecha prototypes and experimental components.

Daredevil: Holovid entertainment is as popular in the 2050s as television is today. While special effects can simulate most dangerous spectacles, audiences like to see entertainers put life and limb at risk. Daredevils are more rare than in the early part of the 20th century, however.

Bodyguard: From captains of industry to important political figures, many luminaries need protecting from the crime, terrorism, and warfare that are rampant in 2053.

Field Scientist: Especially among the colonies, Field Scientists are common, because most scientific research is done in lonely outposts somewhere in the solar system.

Techie: Technology is more important than ever, and most people rely utterly on the machines around them to get the necessities of life. On the colonies, you can't breathe, grow food, or walk around without at least some assistance from machines. And when the most important units on a battlefield are high-tech suits of powered armor, technology is paramount there, too.

Field Medic: Life is cheap among the security forces, especially on Earth, but elite units generally employ Field Medics to keep well-trained troopers alive to fight again.

Investigator: Crime is as common in the future as it is today. While Investigators rarely pilot mechas, their investigations may bring them in pursuit of criminals who can't be apprehended any other way.

Personality: While the cult of celebrity isn't as strong in 2053 as it is in the early part of the century, many holovid stars, musicians, and politicians are known across the solar system. As the war progresses, some mecha pilots may become celebrities themselves.

Negotiator: Though war has erupted between the colonies and Earth, delicate negotiations between the two factions continue. And among the colonies, there's a lot of negotiation required just to keep the lunar colonies, Martian colonies, and more far-flung outposts working together.

AL3K Dragon

NEW ADVANCED CLASSES

None of the above classes overtly help you pilot a mecha, although you can do so by making wise feat and skill choices. The following advanced classes are designed to make good mecha pilots regardless of the character's other interests. They all have access to the Pilot skill and various mecha feats (also described below).

Mecha Shock Trooper

Among mecha pilots, the Mecha Shock Troopers are regarded as brave—or suicidal. Piloting fast mechas designed for melee combat, Shock Troopers close with the enemy as quickly as possible, then use their high-tech weapons to destroy their foes. It takes great courage to fly toward a squad of plasma cannons when everyone

else is running away, but that's the job of a Shock Trooper. Physical prowess is paramount for the Shock Trooper, who relies on his amplified muscles and reflexes to survive on the high-tech battlefield.

Select this advanced class if you want your character to excel in mecha-vs.-mecha melee combat and the physical aspects of mecha operation.

The fastest path into this advanced class is from the Strong hero basic class, though other paths are possible.

Shock Trooper

Matt Hatton

Requirements

To qualify to become a Mecha Shock Trooper, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +3.

Skills: Knowledge (mecha) 3 ranks.

Feat: Mecha Operation.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Mecha Shock Trooper advanced class.

Hit Die

The Mecha Shock Trooper gains 1d10 hit points per level. The character's Constitution modifier applies.

Action Points

The Mecha Shock Trooper gains a number of action points equal to 6 + one-half his character level, rounded down, every time he attains a new level in this class.

Class Skills

The Mecha Shock Trooper's class skills are as follows.

Computer Use (Int), Drive (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (current events, mecha, popular culture, tactics) (Int), Listen (Wis), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Read/Write Language (none), Repair (Int), Speak Language (none), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 3 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Mecha Shock Trooper advanced class:

Mecha Weapons Proficiency: The Mecha Shock Trooper gains Mecha Weapons Proficiency as a bonus feat.

Bonus Feats: At 1st, 5th, and 9th level, a Mecha Shock Trooper gets a bonus feat. The bonus feat must be selected from the following list, and the Mecha Shock Trooper must meet all the prerequisites of the feat to select it:

Table 1–01: The Mecha Shock Trooper

Class Level	*Base Attack Bonus*	*Fort*	*Ref*	*Will*	*Special*	*Defense Bonus*	*Reputation Bonus*
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Bonus feats	+1	+1
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Weapon Specialization	+2	+1
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Extra melee damage	+2	+1
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Knockdown	+3	+2
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Bonus feat	+4	+2
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	Improved Grab	+4	+2
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Topple	+5	+3
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	Shield block	+6	+3
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Bonus feat	+6	+3
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Supreme Critical	+7	+4

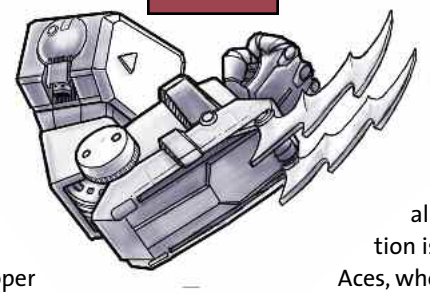
Acrobatic, Combat Reflexes, Combat Throw, Elusive Target, Improved Combat Throw, Unbalance Opponent, Weapon Focus (any mecha melee weapon).

Weapon Specialization: At 2nd level, a Mecha Shock Trooper gains weapon specialization with a specific melee weapon that he also has applied the Weapon Focus feat or class feature to. You get a +2 bonus on damage rolls with the chosen weapon.

Extra Melee Damage: A 3rd-level Shock Trooper is particularly adept at attacking other mechas with melee weapons. Additionally, slam attacks made with the mecha's fists deal damage as if the mecha were one size larger than it actually is (Large mechas deal 2d6 points of damage, Huge mechas deal 2d8 points of damage, and so on). A 3rd-level Mecha Shock Trooper piloting a Colossal mecha deals 4d8 points of damage.

Knockdown: When the Mecha Shock Trooper makes a bull rush attempt and pushes his foe back at least 4 meters, he can forego 2 meters of the push to make a trip attempt against that foe that doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity. The trip attempt occurs at the end of the movement from the push. Each additional 2 meters of push the Mecha Shock Trooper foregoes grants a +2 circumstance bonus to the trip attempt, but the bull rush must still move the foe at least 2 meters.

PC-12 Pouncer



For example, if the Mecha Shock Trooper beats his foe's Strength check by 10 points, he can push the foe back a total of 6 meters (2 meters for succeeding, and an additional 2 meters for each 5 points by which he won the Strength check). He also could push his foe back 4 meters, then make a trip attempt, or push his foe back 2 meters, then make a trip attempt with a +2 circumstance bonus.

Improved Grab: At 6th level, the Mecha Shock Trooper gains the Improved Grab extraordinary ability whenever he is piloting a mecha. Improved grab works only on opponents at least one size smaller than the Shock Trooper's mecha. For more information on Improved Grab, see Chapter 8 of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*.

Topple: At 3rd level, the Mecha Shock Trooper has become adept at knocking other mechas prone, pushing them beyond what their gyroscopes and inertial compensators can compensate for. If the Mecha Shock Trooper scores a critical hit in melee against another mecha, that mecha's pilot must succeed at a Reflex saving throw (DC equal to damage dealt) or fall prone. A toppled mecha also takes damage normally and is subject to the critical hit normally (see Chapter 3 of *Mecha Crusade* for rules on critical hits against mechas).

Shield Block: Against melee attacks, the shield component of an 8th-level Mecha Shock Trooper is more effective because the Trooper can anticipate the likely melee attacks in any combat situation. The equipment bonus to Defense that a shield component provides is doubled against melee attacks. For example, a Mecha Shock Trooper with a Barricade shield gains a +16 equipment bonus to Defense against melee attacks and retains the shield's normal +8 equipment bonus to Defense against ranged attacks.

Supreme Critical: When a 10th-level Mecha Shock Trooper scores a critical hit in melee against another mecha, he can roll twice on the critical hit table (in Chapter 3 of Mecha Crusade), then take the result he likes.

Mecha Ace

The sheer delight of flying across the sky, the icy calm when you've got a target in your sights, and the camaraderie of your squadron after a battle—those are the highest virtues of the Mecha Ace.

The Mecha Ace is a pilot who concentrates on the art of the maneuver. He is capable of graceful swoops, blindly fast evasive maneuvers, and unerring interceptions. Ranged weapons are his favorites; he likes to deal death from an impersonal distance. Perfect hand-eye coordination is taken for granted among Mecha Aces, who alternately impress and infuriate other mecha pilots with their bravado.

Select this class if you want to fly better than anyone else, and if you want lasers, plasma cannons, and guided missiles to be your weapons of choice. You have all the derring-do of the World War I fighter ace, brought into the 21st century.

Most Mecha Aces were once Fast heroes, although a significant number were Charismatic heroes.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Mecha Ace, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Skills: Pilot 6 ranks.

Feat: Mecha Operation.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Mecha Ace advanced class.

Hit Die

The Mecha Ace gains 1d10 hit points per level. The character's Constitution modifier applies.

Action Points

The Mecha Ace gains a number of action points equal to 6 + one-half his character level, rounded down, every time he attains a new level in this class.

Class Skills

The Mecha Ace's class skills are as follows.

Bluff (Cha), Computer Use (Int), Drive (Dex), Gamble (Wis), Knowledge (current events, mecha, popular culture, streetwise) (Int), Navigation (Int), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Read/Write Language (none), Repair (Int), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language (none), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 5 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Mecha Ace advanced class:

Mecha Dodge: A combination of quick, darting moves and raw velocity makes the Mecha Ace hard to hit. When flying in a mecha, the Mecha Ace gains a +2 dodge bonus to Defense.

Familiarity: Starting at 2nd level, a Mecha Ace gains a bonus on Pilot and Repair checks when used on a mecha he designates as familiar. The same bonus is applied to the Mecha Ace's attack rolls with the mecha's ranged weapons. This bonus is +1 at 2nd level and increases by 1 every two levels thereafter (4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th).

To designate a mecha as familiar, the Mecha Ace must have operated it for at least three months. Minor changes and upgrades to the mecha don't affect familiarity, but if the Mecha Ace switches to a mecha with a different size, different base material, different flight system, or more than one new weapon, he must operate it for at least a month before he is familiar with it. The Mecha Ace can be familiar with only one mecha at a time.

Fly-By Attack: When piloting a flying mecha, the Mecha Ace can take a move action (including a dive) and an attack action at any point during the move. The Mecha Ace cannot take a second move action during a round when it makes a flyby attack.

Evasive Action: At 5th level, the Mecha Ace can make a Pilot check to lessen the damage dealt by a successful against his mecha. If the Pilot check exceeds the attack roll, the damage dealt to the Mecha Ace's mecha is halved (round fractions down, minimum of 1 point of damage). The Mecha

Mecha Ace

Jake Parker

Table 1–02: The Mecha Ace

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort	Ref	Will	Special	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1st	+0	+0	+2	+1	Mecha Dodge	+1	+1
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+2	Familiarity +1	+1	+1
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+2	Fly-By Attack	+2	+2
4th	+3	+1	+4	+2	Familiarity +2	+2	+2
5th	+3	+1	+4	+3	Evasive Action	+3	+3
6th	+4	+2	+5	+3	Familiarity +3	+3	+3
7th	+5	+2	+5	+4	Instinctive Maneuverability	+4	+4
8th	+6	+2	+6	+4	Familiarity +4	+4	+4
9th	+6	+3	+6	+4	Improved Evasive Action	+5	+5
10th	+7	+3	+7	+5	Familiarity +5	+5	+5

Cyborg

Mikael Noguchi/Chester Laquian Lawrence

Ace can make an evasive action check once per round.

Instinctive Maneuverability: At 7th level, the Mecha Ace has an instinctive command of the vectored thrusters of his mecha. Any mecha he flies improves by one maneuverability class.

Improved Evasive Action: At 9th level, the Mecha Ace's evasive action improves. A successful Pilot check negates all damage dealt by the attack.

Cyborg

Most mecha pilots blur the line between man and machine. Cyborgs obliterate it.

Cyborgs are soldiers—generally but not always mecha pilots—who have a number of high-tech machines implanted directly into their bodies. A fusion of flesh and metal, Cyborgs rely on high-tech components to keep their organic parts functioning. As they progress in this character class, Cyborg characters acquire more and better machine components. By 10th level, a Cyborg may be more machine than man.

Moreso than many character classes, Cyborg characters require some work on the part of the gamemaster. Whenever the Cyborg attains another character level, the gamemaster should provide the story justification for the Cyborg getting the surgery necessary to acquire more machine parts. Conversely, gamemaster and players need to accept the story conceit that Cyborgs only attain new cybernetic parts when their character has attained a new level. Viewed from within the world of *Mecha Crusade*, Cyborg equipment is available at any time. Theoretically, any character can simply have the surgery done and install as much cyberware as he likes. But around the game table, it doesn't work that way. Non-Cyborg characters aren't interested in cyberware, and for some reason, Cyborgs only get cybernetic upgrades when they attain new levels. The story justification might be that the Cyborg character despises his cyberware, or maybe the surgery is so dangerous that Cyborgs need special clearances just to get new implants.

Select this class if you want to be able to shrug off damage that would drop an ordinary character or access to special abilities that no other character class has. But if you want to interact with NPCs, Cyborg isn't the class for you.

Table 1–03: The Cyborg

Class Level	*Base Attack Bonus*	*Fort*	*Ref*	*Will*	*Special*	*Defense Bonus*	*Reputation Bonus*
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0	Cyberware	+1	+0
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+0	Bonus feat	+1	+0
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+1	Cyberware	+2	+1
4th	+3	+4	+1	+1	Cyberware	+2	+1
5th	+3	+4	+1	+1	Bonus feat	+3	+1
6th	+4	+5	+2	+2	Cyberware	+3	+2
7th	+5	+5	+2	+2	Cyberware	+4	+2
8th	+6	+6	+2	+2	Bonus feat	+4	+2
9th	+6	+6	+3	+3	Cyberware	+5	+3
10th	+7	+7	+3	+3	Cyberware	+5	+3

Table 1–04: Cyberware

Level + Con modifier	*Basic Cyberware*	*Improved Cyberware*
1	Vehicle I/O datajack (+4 equipment bonus on Pilot checks)	*na*
2	Synthskin and composite bone (2 free talents, one each from the Damage Reduction and Energy Resistance talent trees)	Improved vehicle datajack (as basic, but +6 on Pilot checks and +4 on Repair checks)
3	Blood nanites (heals twice as fast as normal)	Improved skin and bone (keep the two free talents and pick one more each from the Damage Reduction and Energy Resistance talent trees)
4	Retinal targeter (+1 equipment bonus on ranged attacks)	Improved blood nanites (heals ten times as fast as normal)
5	Robotic hand (1d6 lethal slam attack, +2 equipment bonus to Str)	Improved retinal targeter (as basic, but +2 bonus)
6	Servomotor augmentation (+2 equipment bonus to your choice of Str, Dex, or Con)	Improved Robotic Hand (has claws that emerge from forearm as free action, deal 1d10 lethal damage in melee; retain +2 Str bonus)
7	Full-spectrum sensor suite (gain benefit of Enigma sensors within 20 meters)	Improved servomotors (as basic, but +4 equipment bonus)
8	Adrenal booster (+4 Str, +4 Con, –2 Defense for 3 + Con modifer rounds, once per day)	Improved full-spectrum (as basic, but 40 meters)
9	Concealed laser pistol (laser generally emerges from hand or eye)	Improved adrenal booster (as basic but three times per day)
10+	Artificial body (character becomes construct but retains Int; HD become d10s and cyborg gains 10 bonus hit points)	Improved laser pistol (as basic, but equivalent to heavy laser pistol)

Many Cyborgs were once Tough heroes, if only because Tough heroes tend to appreciate the benefits of the Cyborg lifestyle.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Cyborg, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +2.

Feat: Endurance.

Special: Must have been reduced to –1 hit points or lower (generally during the battle that concluded the previous adventure), then brought back to full health in a high-tech hospital.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Cyborg advanced class.

Hit Die

The Cyborg gains 1d10 hit points per level. The character's Constitution modifier applies.

Action Points

The Cyborg gains a number of action points equal to 6 + one-half his character level, rounded down, every time he attains a new level in this class.

Class Skills

The Cyborg's class skills are as follows.

Computer Use (Int), Craft (electronic, pharmaceutical) (Int), Disguise (Cha), Drive (Dex), Knowledge (current events, mechas, technology), Pilot (Dex), Read/Write Language (none), Repair (Int), Speak Language (none), Treat Injury (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 3 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Cyborg advanced class:

Cyberware: Each time this class feature is earned, the cyborg gains a new cybernetic implant or receives an upgrade to an existing one. The cyborg chooses one piece of cyberware from Table 1–04. His Cyborg level plus Consititution modifier determines which cyberware he can choose. The improved versions of the cyberware listed on Table 1–04 can be selected only if the basic version is already installed in the Cyborg character. He can't choose

the same cyberware twice, except for servomotor augmentation, which can be chosen up to three times (once each for Strength, Dexterity, and Consititution).

Each piece of cyberware installed grants a cumulative –1 penalty to Charisma. Replacing basic cyberware with its improved counterpart doesn't increase the Charisma penalty.

Cyberware is visually obvious to even a casual observer. Cyborgs who try to fit into normal society use the Disguise skill to hide their implants (DC 10 + 2 per cyberware).

Bonus Feats: At 2nd, 5th, and 8th level, a Cyborg gets a bonus feat. The bonus feat must be selected from the following list, and the cyborg must meet all the prerequisites of the feat to select it: Alertness, Athletic, Blind-Fight, Builder, Cautious, Focused, Great Fortitude, Lightning Reflexes, Meticulous, Toughness.

Weapon Designer

For the last five years, almost all military research and development money goes to one place: mechas. The giant robot suits are simply too overpowering and versatile on the battlefield to ignore. You're an up-and-coming scientist with several important components to your name already. And naturally you relish the chance to test your designs firsthand.

Weapon Designer

Mikael Noguchi/Chester Laquian Lawrence

The Weapon Designer advanced class combines the ability to pilot a mecha with an unparalleled knowledge of what makes high-tech powered armor work. Though your focus is the weapons systems installed in your mecha, you're also adept at eking extra performance out of the mecha's control, servomotor, and flight systems.

Select this class if you enjoy inventing new mecha components and "souping up" your mecha. You'll be capable in a mecha fight, but you're vulnerable outside your suit.

Smart heroes are the obvious candidates to become Weapon Designers, and other character classes will have to work hard to achieve the relatively difficult entry requirements.

Requirements

To qualify to become a weapon designer, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Skills: Computer Use 7 ranks, Craft (electronic) 7 ranks, Disable Device 5 ranks.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Weapon Designer advanced class.

Hit Die

The Weapon Designer gains 1d6 hit points per level. The character's Constitution modifier applies.

Action Points

The Weapon Designer gains a number of action points equal to 6 + one-half his character level, rounded down, every time he attains a new level in this class.

Class Skills

The Weapon Designer's class skills are as follows.

Computer Use (Int), Craft (electronic, mechanical) (Int), Demolitions (Int), Disable Device (Int), Drive (Dex), Knowledge (earth and life sciences, mechas, physical sciences, pop culture, technology) (Int), Navigate (Int), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Read/Write Language (none), Repair (Int), Research (Int), Search (Int), Speak Language (none).

Skill Points at Each Level: 7 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Weapon Designer advanced class:

Bonus Feat: At 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, the Weapon Designer gets a bonus feat. The bonus feat must be selected from the following list, and the Weapon Designer must meet all the prerequisites of the feat to select it (feats with

an asterisk are new for *Mecha Crusade* and are described below): Builder, Cautious, Combat Expertise, Control Disruption Attack*, Educated, Gearhead, Mecha Operation*, Mecha Weapons Proficiency*, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Plasma Overboost*, Point Blank Shot, Studious.

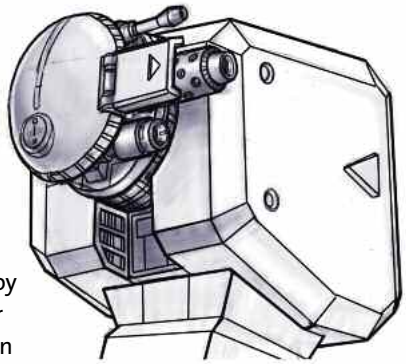
Extreme Mecha Weaponry: At 2nd level, a Weapon Designer knows mecha technology well enough to push it beyond its tested limits.

By spending 1 action point and making a Craft (electronic) skill check, the Weapon Designer can temporarily improve a mecha weapon's performance—at the risk of causing the mecha to need repairs later. The DC for the Craft check depends on the type of improvement being made, as shown on the table below.

Improvement	*Craft DC*	*Repair Chance (d%)*
+1 on damage	15	01–25
+2 on damage	20	01–50
+3 on damage	25	01–75
+2 m to range increment	15	01–25
+4 m to range increment	25	01–50
+1 equipment bonus on attack	20	01–25
+2 equipment bonus on attack	25	01–50
+3 equipment bonus on attack	30	01–75

The Weapon Designer performs the extreme modifications in 1 hour. She can't take 10 or take 20 on this check. If the check succeeds, the improvement lasts for a number of minutes equal to her weapon designer class level, beginning when the component is first used. The Weapon Designer selects the single improvement she wants to make prior to making the check. After the duration of the effect ends, the component reverts to its previous state and a repair chance percentile roll is made. The result of this roll indicates whether or not the component requires repairs before it can be used again.

Build Weapon System: Given time, a 4rd-level Weapon Designer can assemble weapon components out of off-the-shelf parts. Because mecha components aren't bought and sold on the open market, they're measured in build points, which represent the amount of high-tech and experimental gear used to construct them. Most military units that employ mechas simply give their junior officers a budget in build points, and the officers requisition the right mecha components for the mission.



M-2 Puma pop-up turret

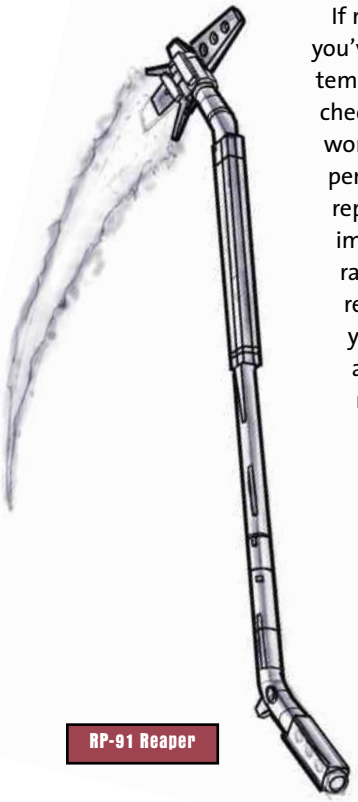
A Weapon Designer can requisition basic components and combine them in unorthodox ways to get more bang for the build point. To build a weapon system, select a component from Chapter 2 of *Mecha Crusade*, then spend half its build point cost in build points and one-tenth its build point cost in experience points. For example, if you're trying to build a Dragon flame thrower (3,000 bp), it'll cost you 1,500 build points and 300 XP. It takes one day (more or less uninterrupted) to construct a weapon component for each 1,000 build points in its full cost.

Extreme Mecha Thrusters: This class feature, attained at 6th level, functions exactly as Extreme Mecha Weaponry above, except that it allows the weapon designer to customize the flight systems on his mecha, according to the table below.

Improvement	*Craft DC*	*Repair Chance (d%)*
+2 equipment bonus on Pilot checks	15	01–25
+4 equipment bonus on Pilot checks	20	01–50
+6 equipment bonus on Pilot checks	25	01–75
Improve maneuverability by one category	25	01–25
+10 m bonus to fly speed	15	01–25
+20 m bonus to fly speed	25	01–50
+40 m bonus to fly speed	35	01–75

Table 1–05: The Weapon Designer

Class Level	*Base Attack Bonus*	*Fort*	*Ref*	*Will*	*Special*	*Defense Bonus*	*Reputation Bonus*
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Bonus feat	+1	+0
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Extreme Mecha Weaponry	+1	+0
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Bonus feat	+2	+1
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Build Weapon System	+2	+1
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Bonus feat	+3	+1
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Extreme Mecha Thrusters	+3	+2
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Bonus feat	+4	+2
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Build Flight System	+4	+2
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Bonus feat	+5	+3
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Mecha Design Genius	+5	+3



RP-91 Reaper

If repairs are needed after you've souped up the control systems to get a bonus on Pilot checks, the mecha's controls still work, but poorly: take a –10 penalty on Pilot checks until repairs are made. Likewise, if you improve the maneuverability rating of your mecha and repairs are required afterward, your mecha has a maneuverability rating of clumsy until repairs are made. But if the thrusters fail (which might happen if you take the speed boosts above), the mecha plummets from the sky, taking 1d6 points of damage for each 4 meters fallen (20d6 maximum). A series of klaxons and warning lights indicate if and when the thrusters stop working.

Build Flight System: The 8th-level Weapon Designer has branched out from armaments to aerodynamics, avionics, and other flight-related disciplines. She now can design flight-related components (anything listed in the Flight Gear section of Chapter 2) using the same rules described in Build Weapon System, above. For example, a Weapon Designer can build Delta thruster boots for a Large mecha (4,000 build points) by spending 4 days, 2,000 build points, and 400 XP.

Mecha Design Genius: The 10th-level Weapon Designer is on the cutting edge of mecha creation, and other mecha builders regularly seek her advice on the intricacies of everything from servomotor heat-baffles to molecular differences in orbit-forged aluminum alloys. The Weapon Designer can build a complete mecha—base body, structural options, and all components—of her own design. This functions as the Build Mecha Weapon and Build Flight System class features above, except that the Weapon Designer can build an entire mecha. For example, a 10th-level Weapon Designer can build the equivalent to a Silvereye mecha (28,000 build points) by spending 28 days, 14,000 build points, and 2,800 XP.

Sleeper Agent

By the middle of the 21st century, the techniques of hypnosis, psychology, nanomedicine, and neuroscience have created a new kind of spy: the Sleeper Agent. The term used to mean an agent left "sleeping" undercover without a mission for years at a time. Now it means a spy who doesn't even realize she is a spy.

Sleeper Agents are programmed with hundreds of passwords, cover identities, drop points, and other tools of the spy trade. But they're buried so deep within the Sleeper's brain that even the most persistent interrogation won't reveal the Sleeper Agent's objective, employer, or mission details. Only a coded message—often delivered verbally, but sometimes embedded in a computer graphics file—will do the trick. The Sleeper Agent remembers what she needs to know, then forgets it at the end of the mission. Or at least that's how it works in theory. In practice, the brain of a Sleeper Agent sometimes releases information before it's supposed to, and its ability to delete unneeded memories is rarely perfect.

Player characters are these "imperfect" Sleeper Agents. They're troubled by strange dreams of people they've never met, and sometimes an unusual phrase in casual conversation releases a flood of technical information about a mission the character hasn't been assigned to—yet. The central conceit about the Sleeper Agent character is that each time she gains a level, she unlocks a little more of her own head.

In the world of *Mecha Crusade*, Sleeper Agents chase after the tastiest of espionage prizes: mecha weapon

Table 1–06: The Sleeper Agent

Class Level	*Base Attack Bonus*	*Fort*	*Ref*	*Will*	*Special*	*Defense Bonus*	*Reputation Bonus*
1st	+0	+2	+2	+0	Extra Occupation	+1	+0
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+0	Autohypnosis	+1	+0
3rd	+2	+3	+3	+1	Contact, low-level	+2	+1
4th	+3	+4	+4	+1	Extra Occupation	+2	+1
5th	+3	+4	+4	+1	Extra Talent	+3	+1
6th	+4	+5	+5	+2	Contact, mid-level	+3	+2
7th	+5	+5	+5	+2	Extra Occupation	+4	+2
8th	+6	+6	+6	+2	Extra Talent	+4	+2
9th	+6	+6	+6	+3	Contact, high-level	+5	+3
10th	+7	+7	+7	+3	Extra Occupation	+5	+3

designs and sometimes even prototype mechas themselves. Because Sleeper Agents generally don't come back in for retraining, they have both nonmecha and mecha combat prowess hard-wired into their brain. Every spy gets a different set of skills tailored to specific missions, but almost every Sleeper Agent has an expert martial artist, qualified marksman, and mecha test pilot locked away somewhere in her head.

Select this class if you'd rather steal someone else's cool mecha than build your own. If you want to be in the middle of the action whether you're in your mecha or not, the Sleeper Agent is for you. The Sleeper Agent class also allows a high degree of customization—there's no telling what training is buried in your brain—so it's a good choice if you like playing against type.

Many Sleeper Agents were once Dedicated heroes, because they're likely to survive the months of brainwashing, neurosurgery, and deep hypnosis with their sanity intact.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Sleeper Agent, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Skills: Concentration 4 ranks, Sense Motive 6 ranks.

Feats: Alertness or Attentive.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Sleeper Agent advanced class.

Hit Die

The Sleeper Agent gains 1d8 hit points per level. The character's Constitution modifier applies.

Action Points

The Sleeper Agent gains a number of action points equal to 6 + one-half his character level, rounded down, every time he attains a new level in this class.

Class Skills

The Sleeper Agent's class skills are as follows.

Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Disguise (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Investigate (Int), Knowledge (any) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Read/Write Language (none), Search (Int), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language (none), Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 7 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Sleeper Agent advanced class:

Extra Occupation: At 1st, 4th, 7th, and 10th level, the Sleeper Agent gains access to one of her alternate identities. In additional to a crushing amount of mundane personal information, the character learns a new occupation. Select any occupation listed in Chapter 1 of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* whenever you attain this class feature. As long as you meet its prerequisites, you get all the benefits listed except for the Wealth Bonus Increase. For example, a 1st-level Sleeper Agent could awaken an alternate identity that was a low-level investigator for Unified Earth Police. Her player would select the Law Enforcement occupation described in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* and choose Gather Information and Intimidate as permanent class skills. She also could take Light Armor Proficiency as a bonus feat, but she wouldn't get the +1 wealth bonus increase that goes with the Law Enforcement occupation.

Autohypnosis: The Sleeper Agent gains access to the Autohypnosis skill, which is always considered a class skill for her. She can use her skill points to buy ranks in Autohypnosis, just like other skills in the game. Characters who aren't Sleeper Agents can't purchase ranks in Autohypnosis.

Sleeper Agent

Matt Hatton

Autohypnosis (Wis): Trained only. You have trained your mind to resist certain injuries and threats while also gaining a few select benefits.

Check: The DC and effect depend on the task you attempt.

Task	*DC*
Memorize	15
Tolerate poison	Poison's DC
Willpower	20
Scour deep memories	20

Memorize: You can attempt to memorize a long string of numbers, a long passage of verse, or a particularly diffucult piece of information. Each successful check allows you to memorize up to 250 words or the equivalent of what could be comfortably contained on single sheet of paper. You always retain this information; however, you can recall it only with a successful Autohypnosis check.

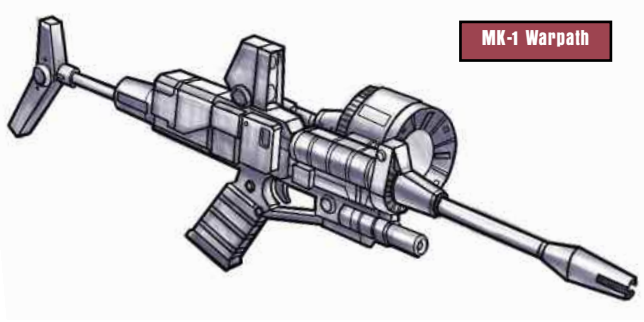
Tolerate Poison: In response to being poisoned, you can make an Autohypnosis check on your next action. A successful check grants you a +4 morale bonus on your saving throw to resist the poison's secondary damage.

Willpower: If reduced to 0 hit points (disabled), you may make an Autohypnosis check. If successful, you can perform a strenuous action without taking 1 point of damage. A failed check carries no penalties—you can choose not to perform the strenuous action. If you do perform the strenuous action after failing the check, you take 1 point of damage, as normal.

Scour Deep Memories: If you fail at a Knowledge check or similar check that doesn't ordinarily allow a retry, you can take a full-round action to search your trove of implanted memories for something helpful. If you succeed at an Autohypnosis check (DC 20), you may retry the original check with a +4 morale bonus. You can scour your memories only once per check.

Try Again? For memorize, you can make a check once per round. You can't try again to tolerate poison. You can't try again in the same round for willpower.

Special: You can take 10 on Autohypnosis checks, but you can't take 20.



Most uses of Autohypnosis are attack actions. Willpower is a free action that can be attempted once per round. Scour deep memories is a full-round action.

Contact: A Sleeper Agent of 3rd level or higher knows passwords and other secret signals that tie her into a network of associates and informants. Each time the sleeper agent gains a contact, the GM should develop a supporting character to represent the contact. The player can suggest the type of contact his or her character wants to gain, but the contact must be an ordinary character (not a heroic character, as described in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*).

Note that not all these contacts are Sleeper Agents themselves. They certainly might be, or they might be less-important agents that simply have orders to "give the customer whatever she wants if she gives you the three-fingered handshake." The Sleeper Agent can use these contacts for whatever she likes, even if it has nothing to do with (or actively opposes) the original mission for which she was programmed. Most spy operations are compartmentalized so that no one knows the whole mission, and even the curious wouldn't expect an accurate answer from a Sleeper Agent.

Contacts include informants, black marketeers, crime lords, journalists, street people, store clerks, air-taxi drivers, and others who can provide limited aid and information.

Table 1–07: The Wing Captain

Class Level	*Base Attack Bonus*	*Fort*	*Ref*	*Will*	*Special*	*Defense Bonus*	*Reputation Bonus*
1st	+0	+0	+1	+2	Leadership	+0	+1
2nd	+1	+0	+2	+3	Exploit weakness	+1	+1
3rd	+2	+1	+2	+3	Bonus feat	+1	+1
4th	+3	+1	+2	+4	Plan	+1	+2
5th	+3	+1	+3	+4	Small-unit tactics	+2	+2
6th	+4	+2	+3	+5	No sweat	+2	+2
7th	+5	+2	+4	+5	Bonus feat	+2	+3
8th	+6	+2	+4	+6	Uncanny survival	+3	+3
9th	+6	+3	+4	+6	Sixth sense	+3	+3
10th	+7	+3	+5	+7	Fast tactics	+3	+34

A contact will not accompany a Sleeper Agent on missions or risk his or her life. A contact can, however, provide information or render a service (make a specific skill check on your behalf).

The Sleeper Agent can't call on the same contact more than once in a week, and when she does call on a contact, compensation may be required for the assistance he or she renders. In general, a professional associate won't be compensated monetarily, but instead will consider that the Sleeper Agent owes him or her a favor. The GM character will call on a favor in return when the opportunity arises. Contacts with underworld or street connections usually demand monetary compensation for the services they render, and experts in the use of skills normally want to be paid for the services they provide.

For underworld or street contacts, this expense is represented by a Wealth check against a purchase DC of 10 for the low-level contact, 15 for the mid-level contact, or 20 for the high-level contact. For skilled experts, the purchase DC is 10 + the ranks the expert has in the appropriate skill.

Extra Talent: At 5th and 8th level, the Sleeper Agent gains a bonus talent, which can be chosen from any talent tree from a base class in which the character has at least one level. The character must meet the prerequisites normally.

Wing Captain

Because they're extraordinarily expensive, mechas usually work in small units on the battlefield. But they're such versatile tools that it takes an incisive, strategic mind to coordinate their efforts. It's not easy simultaneously planning tactics for a half-dozen or more 30-foot-tall armored giants with lasers and missiles and staying alive yourself. That's where the Wing Captain comes in. An officer trained in small-unit tactics and familiar with mechas, he leads from the front of the formation in a mecha of his own. The Wing Captain isn't always literally a captain, ranks vary widely in the many armies and paramilitary organizations that exist in 2053. The Wing Captain generally acts as commander to three to six other mechas (the other player characters, in other words), and has the rank to back up his orders. But few Wing Captains are that spit-and-polish. When your comrades bristle with plasma guns and guided missiles, you want to lead through respect, not because you have an extra stripe on your mecha's shoulder.

Select this class if you want to play a character who acts as a "coach" for the other players and enjoys outwitting his foes before he outfights them, but realize that you're sacrificing some of the focus that other advanced classes, particularly the Mecha Shock Trooper and the Mecha Ace, offer.

Most Wing Captains were once Charismatic heroes. Your brilliant strategies don't mean a thing if no one is listening.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Wing Captain, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Skills: Diplomacy 6 ranks, Knowledge (strategy) 3 ranks.
Feats: Mecha Operation, Renown.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Wing Captain advanced class.

Hit Die

The Wing Captain gains 1d8 hit points per level. The character's Constitution modifier applies.

Action Points

The Wing Captain gains a number of action points equal to 6 + one-half his character level, rounded down, every time he attains a new level in this class.

Wing Captain

Mikael Noguchi/Chester Laquian Lawrence

Class Skills

The Wing Captain's class skills are as follows.

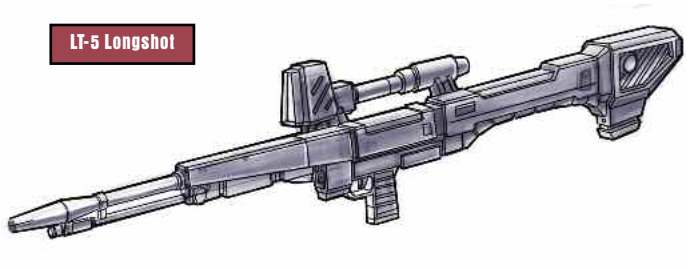
Bluff (Cha), Computer Use (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Drive (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (behavioral sciences, civics, current events, mechas, popular culture, strategy) (Int), Navigate (Int), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Read/Write Language (none), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (none), Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 7 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Wing Captain advanced class:

Leadership: By directing the actions of others, a Wing Captain can increase his chances of success. This requires a Diplomacy check (DC 10 + the number of allies to be assisted) and a full-round action. A success grants a competence bonus on all his allies' skill checks for 1 minute (or a single task if it requires more than 1 minute to complete). The bonus is equal to the Wing Captain's Charisma bonus. All allies to be affected must be within visual or radio range of the Wing Captain, and must be able to understand him.



Exploit Weakness: At 2nd level, the Wing Captain can designate one opponent and use superior strategy to gain an advantage. The Wing Captain uses a move action and makes a Knowledge (strategy) check. If the check succeeds, for the rest of the combat the Wing Captain may use his Intelligence score rather than his Strength or Dexterity scores for attack rolls as he finds ways to outthink his opponent and notices weaknesses in his opponent's tactics.

Bonus Feat: At 3rd and 7th level, the Wing Captain gets a bonus feat. The bonus feat must be selected from the following list, and the Wing Captain must meet all the prerequisites of the feat to select it (feats with an asterisk are new for *Mecha Crusade* and are described below): Attentive, Confident, Educated, Iron Will, Mecha Weapons Proficiency*, Mecha Tactician*, Metabot Leader*, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Trustworthy.

Plan: Prior to a dramatic situation, either combat- or skill-related, the Wing Captain can develop a plan of action to handle the situation. Using this talent requires preparation; a Wing Captain can't use this talent when surprised or otherwise unprepared for a particular situation.

The Wing Captain makes a Knowledge (strategy) check (DC 10). The result of the check provides the Wing Captain and his allies with a circumstance bonus. A Wing Captain can't take 10 or 20 when making this check.

Check Result	*Bonus*
9 or lower	+0 (check failed)
10–14	+1
15–24	+2
25 or higher	+3

This bonus can be applied to all skill checks and attack rolls made by the Wing Captain and his allies, but the bonus only lasts for the first 3 rounds. After that time, reduce the bonus by 1 point (to a minimum of +0) for every additional round the situation continues, as the vagaries of circumstance begin to unravel even the best-laid plans.

Small-Unit Tactics: Beginning at 5th level, a Wing Captain can use his tactical knowledge to direct his allies during a battle. By using his attack action, the Wing Captain can grant any one ally (not including himself) within range (see below) a competence bonus on attack rolls or a dodge bonus to Defense and Reflex saving throws. The bonus is equal to the Wing Captain's Intelligence bonus and lasts a number of rounds equal to 1d4 + the Wing Captain's Charisma modifier.

With a full-round action, the Wing Captain grants the selected bonus to all of his allies (including himself) within range (see below). In this case, the bonus lasts a number of rounds equal to the Wing Captain's Charisma modifier.

All allies to be affected must be within visual or radio range of the officer, and must be able to understand him.

No Sweat: Starting at 6th level, whenever a Wing Captain spends 1 action point to improve the result of a die roll, he rolls an additional 1d6. He can then discard the lowest die roll and add the other(s) to his d20 roll.

Uncanny Survival: Beginning at 8th level, the Wing Captain can add his Wing Captain levels to his Defense for 1 round, once per day. He must declare this at the beginning of his turn, and the Defense bonus lasts until his next round of actions.

This ability comes in handy when the Wing Captain's tactics and subordinates aren't enough, and he is forced to withdraw from the field of combat. The boost to Defense helps to ensure that the Wing Captain escapes to lead again.

Fast Tactics: At 9th level, the Wing Captain requires less time to direct his allies. He can direct a single ally with a free action or all allies with an attack action. Even so, the Wing Captain can use fast tactics only once per round.

Sixth Sense: At 10th level, the Wing Captain becomes a near-legendary commander who seemingly knows what the enemy will do before the enemy knows. Whenever the Wing Captain spends an action point during mecha combat, he gets to add an additional 1d6 to the result. So if a 10th-level Wing Captain/4th-level Charismatic hero normally rolls 3d6 when making the appropriate skill check, he now rolls 4d6.

The Wing Captain's sixth sense ability applies to attack rolls and relevant skill checks such as Pilot, Tumble, and Spot. Sixth sense can be combined with the 6th-level ability, no sweat.

NEW FEATS

The following feats augment those described in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*.

Advanced Mecha Operation

You've received advanced training or extensive practice in mecha movement.

Prerequisite: Mecha Operation feat.

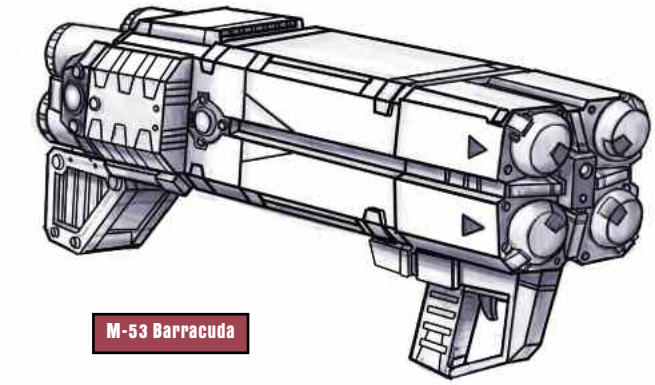
Benefit: Choose a size of mecha (Large, Huge, Gargantuan, or Colossal). When you are piloting a mecha of the appropriate size, you gain a +1 dodge bonus to Defense. Furthermore, armor penalties for operating the mecha are 2 less than they would otherwise be (minimum penalty –0).

Antiarmor Saboteur

You know how to exploit the weak spots of many mecha designs, employing explosives and personal weapons at close range to hit tiny flaws and delicate electronics.

Prerequisite: Demolition 3+ ranks.

Benefit: When attacking a mecha, you can ignore its hardness if you are within 12 meters of it. You cannot use this feat if you are in a mecha yourself because your sensors and weapons lack the precision to hit such tiny areas.



M-53 Barracuda

Control Disruption Attack

You are adept at channeling electricity into an enemy mecha's control system.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus 8+, Precise Shot.

Benefit: If you threaten a critical hit with an electricity attack against another mecha, you may automatically confirm the critical. If you do, the enemy mecha is automatically stunned for 2d4 rounds.

Hair Trigger

You have developed a delicate sense of timing, and your area attacks hit your foes when they're ill-prepared to defend against them.

Prerequisite: Base attack 6+.

Benefit: Whenever you make an attack from your mecha that requires enemies to make Reflex saving throws, the DC for such saves is increased by +2.

Indirect Fire

You can aim heavy weapons in high, arcing paths to hit foes you don't have line of sight to, relying on sensor data, an observer, or guesswork.

Prerequisite: Base attack 4+.

Benefit: You can strike an opponent you don't have line of sight to. It takes a full-round action to make an indirect fire attack. First, designate the 2-meter square you wish to attack, then make a ranged attack roll with the following modifiers.

Condition	*modifier*
Target square acquired through sensor readings (Oracle or similar)	+0
Target square acquired from observer	+2
Successive shots cumulative	+1 per previous shot (maximum bonus of +5)
Observer is providing feedback	cumulative +2 per previous shot (maximum bonus of +10)

The above modifiers are the only ones that apply; other feats and components don't provide attack roll modifiers during indirect fire, and your size and Dexterity don't matter. Nor does the range increment. Because the weapon is being fired in a high, ballistic arc, it can shoot out to 20 range increments.

Even if your attack misses, it'll land according to the scatter rules in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*.

If you hit a 2-meter square, you don't necessarily hit a character in it. Characters have full concealment (and thus a 50% miss chance) from indirect fire that lands in their square. The most effective indirect fire weapons have area effects, and those strike everyone within the area normally.

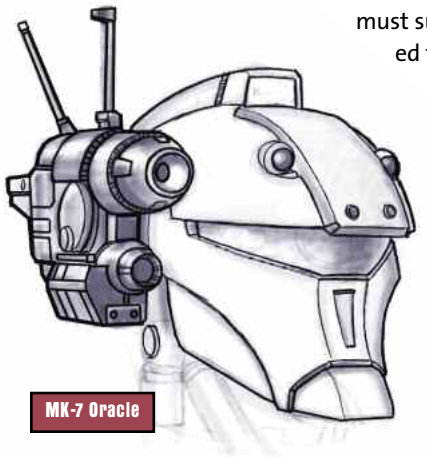
You can't use indirect fire with plasma or laser weapons, and indirect fire is ineffective if the target has cover above them (the attack strikes the cover instead).

Improved Transform

You can rapidly transform your mecha's shape to meet the changing needs of the battlefield.

Benefit: When you pilot a mecha with the Basic Transform or Advanced Transform structural options, you can transform as a move action.

Normal: Transforming a mecha into another configuration is ordinarily a full-round action.



MK-7 Oracle

Improved Maneuverability

You exhibit an uncanny ability to make complex aerial maneuvers with a flying mecha you're piloting.

Benefit: When you pilot a flying mecha, your maneuverability class is one category better than it would otherwise be. This benefit stacks with any similar benefits granted from mecha components or class features. For example, a mecha pilot with Delta D-8 thrusters (poor maneuverability), Kestrel maneuver wings (+1 category), 7 levels in the Mecha Ace advanced class (+1 category), and the Improved Maneuverability feat (+1 category) has perfect maneuverability.

Normal: A mecha's maneuverability class depends on its thruster components.

Laser Dazzle

You can fire your laser weapons at an enemy mecha's sensors, temporarily blinding its pilot.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus 8+, Precise Shot.

Benefit: As a standard action, you can attempt to blind an enemy mecha by making a single attack. The attack deals normal damage if successful, and your foe must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 15) or be blinded for 1d4 rounds.

Mecha Operation

You have basic familiarity with how to pilot a mecha.

Benefit: You no longer suffer the restrictions on movement and penalties on skill checks for being unfamiliar with mecha controls. You can move normally in a mecha and generally perform any action you could if you weren't inside a mecha, subject to the obvious limitations of size. You threaten areas within your reach even if unarmed—the steel fists of your mecha are potent weapons in their own right.

Normal: Characters without this feat suffer a –4 penalty on Pilot checks and any skill checks to which an armor penalty would apply. Furthermore, they cannot run or charge.

Mecha Weapon Proficiency

You know how to acquire targets and fire your mecha's weapons using your onboard computers and sensors.

Benefit: You no longer suffer the standard penalties on attack rolls while you're in your mecha. You can use any feats that refer to firearms with your ranged mecha weapons.

Normal: Characters without this feat suffer a –4 penalty on attack rolls made while they're in a mecha cockpit. Firearm feats don't ordinarily apply to ranged mecha weapons.

Mecha Tactician

You can coordinate the efforts of multiple mechas to great effect in battle.

Benefit: As long as allied mechas remain in tactical communication with you, they gain a +1 morale bonus on attacks and Will saves against fear. Other pilots in your

Mecha Weapons and d20 Modern Feats

If you have the Mecha Weapon Proficiency feat, any feats that apply to firearms (such as Double Tap and Strafe) also apply to relevant ranged mecha weapons. You can strafe with a Comet gatling laser, for example, or fire twice with a Longshot mass driver.

Melee-oriented feats from the Brawl and Combat Martial Arts trees don't apply if you're piloting a mecha, although characters with the Mecha Operation feat threaten all areas within reach of the mecha, and making a slam or other melee attack with a mecha doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity. Feats from the Defensive Martial Arts tree function normally for characters in mechas.

mecha gain the same bonus. The effect lasts for 5 rounds, plus an additional round for each point of Charisma bonus you have.

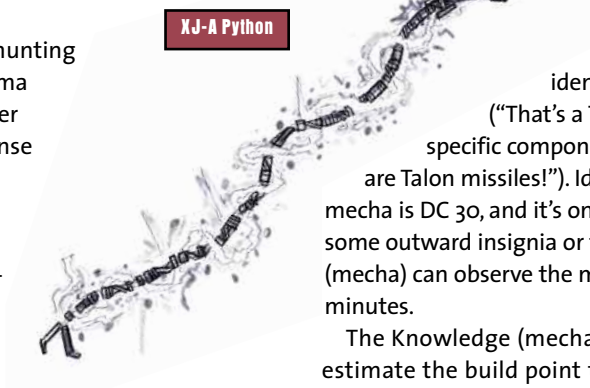
Metabot Leader

You are adept at coordinating the efforts of multiple copilots.

Prerequisite: Mecha Tactician.

Benefit: When you are the main pilot of a mecha, copilots in the same mecha gain a +1 circumstance bonus on attacks and checks.

Plasma Overboost



By disabling safeguards and shunting auxiliary power into your plasma weapons, you can attain greater destructive power at the expense of accuracy.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus 8+, Repair 6+ ranks.

Benefit: When firing a plasma weapon, you can voluntarily take a penalty of up to –5 on your attack roll. If you do, the weapon deals an additional 1d6 points of damage for each –1 penalty you took. The attack penalty persists until the beginning of your next turn, but the additional damage applies only to the next single attack you make.

Thruster Blast

By directing your vectored thrusters all around your mecha, you can kick up a cloud of dust and debris that obscures the battlefield.

Prerequisite: Pilot 10+ ranks.

Benefit: You can aim your thruster exhaust toward the ground to create a hemispherical cloud. If you are within 10 meters of the ground and there's loose debris or dust there, you can create a cloud with a 20-meter radius centered directly below you. The winds so generated snuff out small fires and give guided missiles attacking you a –4 penalty on their attack rolls. Creatures without eye protection caught within the debris cloud are blinded while inside and for 1 round after emerging. The debris cloud grants anyone inside it 50% concealment. Mechas with Enigma sensor suites ignore the concealment effect.

Because mechas have vectored thrust systems, your flight path isn't affected by where you're aiming your exhaust. You don't have to hover or fly upward to create the cloud.

SKILLS

Skills function as described in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*. Their applications may vary a little—in 2053, the Drive skill lets you operate a hovercar, for example—but a hovercar is functionally an automobile so the difference doesn't matter.

Two skills, Knowledge (mecha) and Pilot, deserve further mention here.

Knowledge (Mecha)

A new subcategory of the Knowledge skill, Knowledge (mecha) allows identification of specific models of mechas and components. Generally, identifying a mecha model is DC 10 ("That's a Templar-Zero!"). Identifying a specific component is DC 20 ("Watch out—those are Talon missiles!"). Identifying a specific pilot inside a mecha is DC 30, and it's only possible if the mecha has some outward insignia or the character with Knowledge (mecha) can observe the mystery mecha for at least a few minutes.

The Knowledge (mecha) skill also will let a character estimate the build point total of a heretofore unseen mecha design. The DC for the check is 10 + 5 per 10,000 build points. The GM doesn't tell the player what the DC for the check is, obviously. On a successful check, the character knows the build point value of the mecha within 10%.

Pilot

For simplicity's sake, we've adopted a flight maneuverability system that depends more on the quality of the mecha than on the pilot's skill for simply getting from place to place. You don't have to make Pilot checks to fly across the battlefield—it simply takes too long around the gaming table. Moving on the ground is even easier. You simply do so as if you were a larger creature, making 2-meter adjustments, moving, and charging normally.

But a good Pilot skill bonus still matters because your Pilot skill acts as a ceiling for certain skills you might use while piloting a mecha. If a skill has an armor penalty, you use the lower of your Pilot bonus or the relevant skill bonus when you're making a check. For example, if you want to fly around and behind another mecha using the Tumble skill, you'll attempt a Pilot check or a Tumble check, whichever is lower.

Chapter 3 lists other instances when the Pilot skill is important during combat.

Occupations and Wealth

Mecha Crusade uses the occupations in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*, almost without modification. The sug-

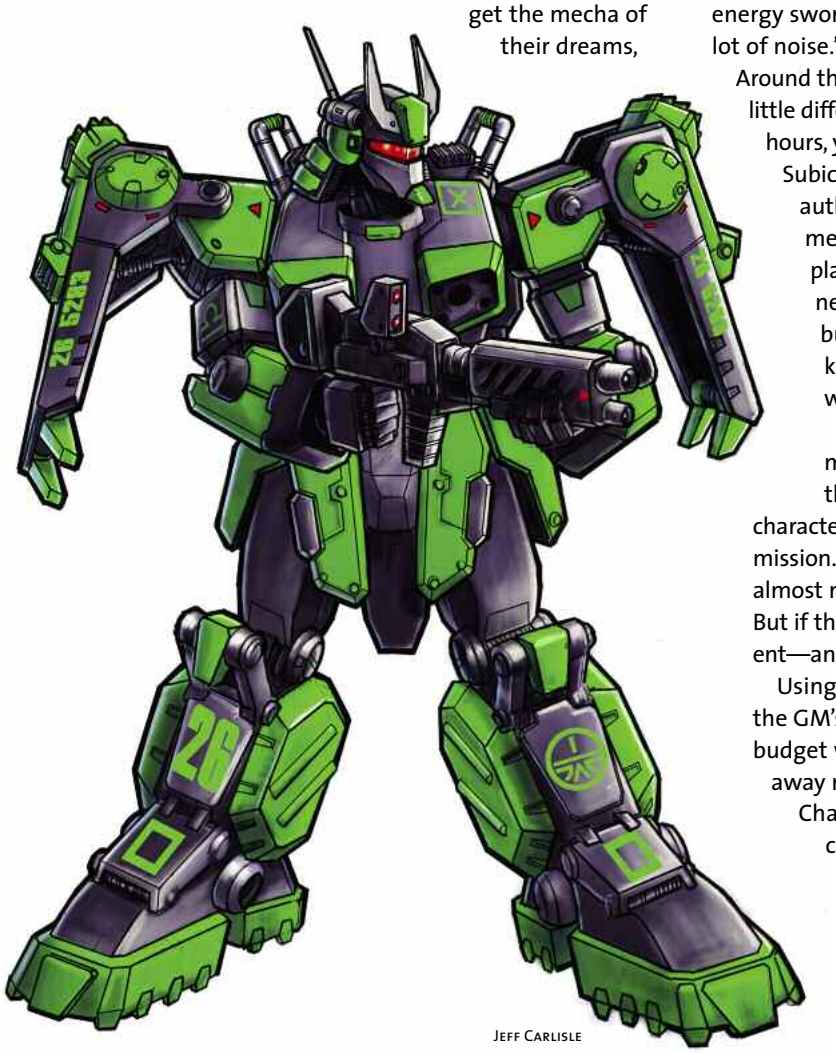
gested campaign setting is only 50 years in the future, so there are still plenty of similarities to the modern world.

One change you may want to make to give your campaign a more anime flair: reduce all the age prerequisites in the occupation listings by two years or more. A lot of Japanese mecha cartoons or manga feature teens—often young teens—behind the controls of ultrapowerful mechas. Chalk it up to cultural differences and include or exclude it in your game as you like.

Wealth

The *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* has a detailed but flexible wealth system, in which characters have a Wealth bonus and pay for items, each of which has a DC. But *Mecha Crusade* measures mecha costs in build points rather than attaching an actual value or a Wealth purchase DC. Why?

It's not good for the game if characters depend on one die roll for so much. If each mecha had a purchase DC, lucky players would get the mecha of their dreams, while their comrades would have to make do with weaker mechas or risk going without one entirely. Worse, the players would all become Dilettantes to get the best mechas possible. And with mechas so important to the game, who could blame them?



Jeff Carlisle

The assumption in *Mecha Crusade* is that the players get assigned their mechas for specific missions. As they get better at what they do (and go up in level), they get assigned better mechas. However, mecha pilots have a certain star quality in the military of 2053, so the player characters' superior officers will usually do what they can to get the characters the mecha gear they want.

Here's what it might sound like in the game world: "Foxtrot team, in 12 hours you'll infiltrate the security cordon around the Subic Bay Supply Depot, then destroy whatever ammunition and fuel you find there."

"Right away, sir," reply the player characters. "We'll need Silvereye mechas with chameleon coating, and at least one of us should have an M-53 Barracuda rocket launcher to handle the actual target. Oh, and let's get energy swords so we can take out light targets without a lot of noise."

Around the game table, the conversation sounds only a little different. "The general describes the mission: in 12 hours, you are to sneak through the security cordon at Subic Bay and destroy the supply depot. He'll authorize up to 20,000 build points each for your mechas," says the GM. The players then eagerly plan what mechas they'll use and which components they'll buy. The player's knowledge of the build point total parallels their characters' knowledge of what mechas will be useful and what the military will actually give them.

Using the conceit of requisitioned, army-issue mechas has a significant side benefit: because they don't technically own the mechas, the characters aren't shy about sacrificing them for the mission. Characters who actually own their mechas almost never eject from even a badly damaged mecha. But if the military will replace the mecha, it's a different—and less frustrating—story.

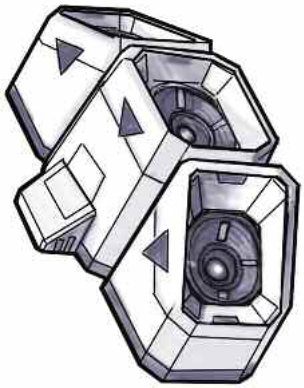
Using the build point system puts a lot of control in the GM's hands. The GM decides what the build point budget will be and has the power to give and take away mechas as he sees fit. Use that power wisely. Chapter 2 has suggested build point budgets for characters at every level. Vary from the suggested budget on the table, sometimes letting the players thrill to mechas laden with gadgetry, and other times testing their ability to make do with second-rate mechas.

CHAPTER TWO: BUILDING A MECHA

Mecha bodies come in Large, Huge, Gargantuan, and Colossal sizes. ***Each body has a number of body slots on it. To build a giant mecha, you just plug components into body slots. Then your character climbs inside, and you're ready for action.***

That's the simple version. In practice, your character will always be requisitioning prototype weapons, angling to get into "elite" units with bigger mecha budgets, and customizing your mecha during spare time. The possibilities for mecha creation are almost limitless. When you launch your own *Mecha Crusade* campaign, take the time to design your own mecha components. And don't be shy about giving them to the bad guys first.

To create a mecha, you'll need some scratch paper, a calculator, and a budget in build points (which your GM will probably provide). Build points (bp) are an abstract measure of the cost of a particular mecha component, bridging the gap between the actual game-world cost of a mecha and *d20 Modern's* wealth system.



Nimbus 3000

STEP 1: CHOOSE A MECHA BODY

Choosing a mecha body is a three-stage process. First, choose how large you want the mecha body to be. Then you'll select the base material you want the structural elements of your mecha to be made of. Finally, you'll select any special qualities (such as a stealth coating or the ability to transform into a submarine) that affect the mecha as a whole.

Mecha Body Size

Each mecha body size has advantages and disadvantages. Bigger mechas are stronger, tougher, and generally more powerful. Some truly mighty weapons and other high-tech components are too massive for smaller mechas to use, but smaller mechas are less expensive and more flexible. It's much easier to sneak into the enemy base with a 4-meter (size Large) mecha that can at least duck through doors and walk through hallways than it would be to sneak past anything with a 20-meter tall (Gargantuan) mecha.

Large Mechas: Essentially big suits of armor, Large mechas excel in urban battlefields and starship boarding actions, where mechas have to move through building interiors to find the enemy. They're also the easiest mechas to pilot. They can't carry the immense array of weapons that bigger mechas can, however, nor are they as strong or durable.

Large mechas have the following body slots available: Helmet, Back, Left Arm, Right Arm, Shoulders, Torso, and Boots.

Large mechas add a +8 equipment bonus to a character's Strength score. They impose a –1 size penalty on attack rolls and to Defense. Depending upon materials used, Large mechas have 100–200 bonus hit points, which are added to the character's total and damaged first. They have a –4 penalty on Hide checks.

Large mechas have a slam attack that deals 1d8 points of damage. They have a reach of 4 meters. Their base speed is 12 meters.

Huge Mechas: The most common size of armor suit, Huge mechas offer a solid balance among cost, agility, and sheer bulk. They're a solid choice on almost any battlefield, though they favor locations where there is at least some variation in terrain. In the wide-open desert of the depths of outer space, they can fall prey to larger mechas.

Huge mechas have the following body slots available: Helmet, Visor, Back, Left Arm, Left Hand, Right Arm, Right Hand, Shoulders, Torso, Belt, and Boots.

Huge mechas add a +16 equipment bonus to a character's Strength score. They impose a –2 size penalty on attack rolls and to Defense. Depending upon materials used, Huge mechas have 200–400 bonus hit points, which are added to the character's total and damaged first. They have a –8 penalty on Hide checks.

Huge mechas have a slam attack that deals 2d6 points of damage. They have a reach of 4 meters. Their base speed is 16 meters.

Table 2–01: Build Point Cost/hp

material type	*hardness*	*Large*	*Huge*	*Gargantuan*	*Colossal*
Alumisteel	10	2,500/100	5,000/200	10,000/400	20,000/800
Duralloy	15	3,000/100	6,000/200	12,000/400	24,000/800
Neovulcanium	20	3,500/100	7,000/200	14,000/400	28,000/800
Refractalloy	15	3,600/100	7,200/200	14,400/400	28,800/800
Crystal carbon	20	4,500/125	9,000/250	18,000/500	36,000/1,000
Megatanium	30	7,500/200	15,000/400	30,000/800	60,000/1,600

Gargantuan Mechas: Units this size are titans of the battlefield, able to destroy almost anything they can hit. Gargantuan mechas are common in outer space environments, but are often too expensive and unwieldy for planetbound missions.

Gargantuan mechas have the following body slots available: Helmet, Visor, Cranium, Upper Back, Lower Back, Left Arm, Left Hand, Right Arm, Right Hand, Left Shoulder, Right Shoulder, Torso 1, Torso 2, Belt, Left Leg, Right Leg, and Boots.

Gargantuan mechas add a +24 equipment bonus to a character's Strength score and a –2 structure penalty to Dexterity. They impose a –4 size penalty on attack rolls and to Defense. Depending upon materials used, Gargantuan mechas have 400–800 bonus hit points, which are added to the character's total and damaged first. They suffer a –12 penalty on Hide checks.

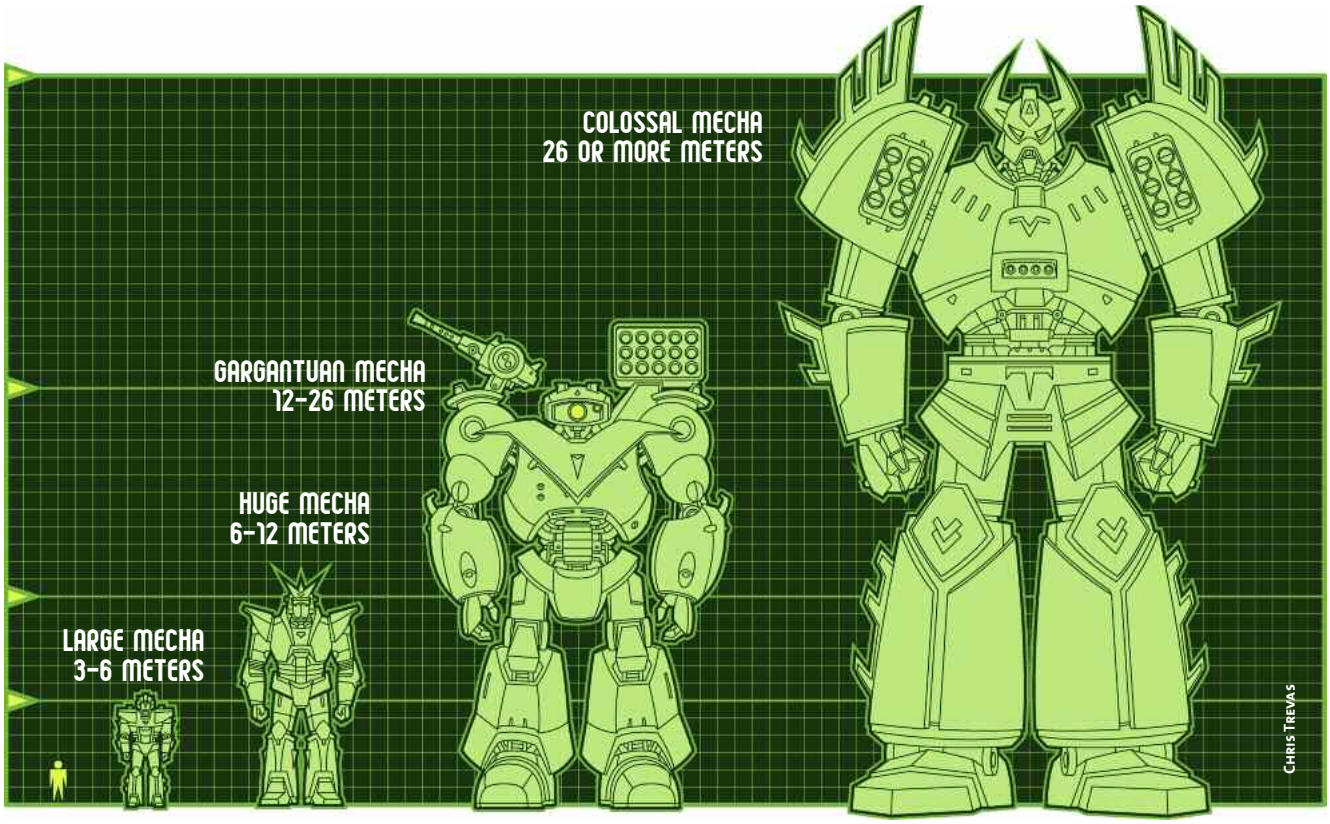
Gargantuan mechas have a slam attack that deals 2d8 points of damage. They have a reach of 6 meters. Their base speed is 20 meters.

Colossal Mechas: Exceedingly rare, these behemoths are largely in the experimental stage, and it's questionable whether their immense cost justifies their ability to singlehandedly dominate the battlefield.

Colossal mechas have the following body slots available: Helmet 1, Helmet 2, Visor, Cranium 1, Cranium 2, Upper Back, Lower Back, Left Arm 1, Left Arm 2, Left Hand, Right Arm 1, Right Arm 2, Right Hand, Left Shoulder, Right Shoulder, Torso 1, Torso 2, Torso 3, Torso 4, Belt 1, Belt 2, Left Leg 1, Left Leg 2, Right Leg 1, Right Leg 2, and Boots.

Colossal mechas add a +32 equipment bonus to a character's Strength score and a –4 structure penalty to Dexterity. They impose a –8 size penalty on attack rolls and to Defense. Depending upon materials used, Colossal mechas have 800–1,600 hit points, which are added to the character's total and damaged first. They suffer a –16 penalty on Hide checks.

Colossal mechas have a slam attack that deals 4d6 points of damage. They have a reach of 6 meters. Their base speed is 24 meters.



Mecha Structure

Once you've decided how large you want your mecha to be, it's time to choose the material from which it was made. The armor skin, interior braces, and other structural parts of a mecha can be made from any sufficiently advanced metal alloy, almost all of which are forged at great expense in secret orbital factories.

Alumisteel: This easy-to-acquire alloy forms the basis for most civilian metal applications. It's lightweight and reasonably strong. Military-grade mechas rarely use it, however, because it just isn't durable enough. It grants a +5 equipment bonus to Defense.

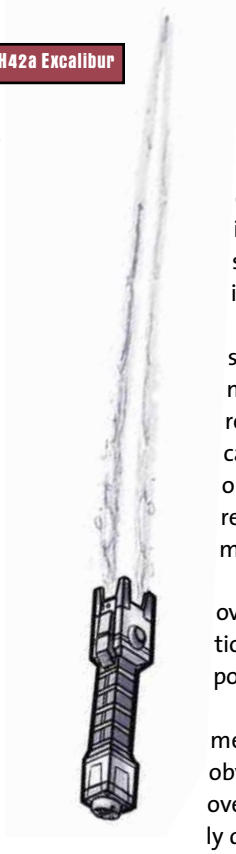
Duralloy: The standard for mecha construction, duralloy is both harder and more durable than alumisteel. It grants a +6 equipment bonus to Defense.

Neovulcanium: Similar to duralloy, neovulcanium uses plasma-forging techniques to create a metal of unparalleled hardness. It grants a +6 equipment bonus to Defense.

Refractalloy: A polymer coating bonded to a layer of duralloy, refractalloy grants laser resistance 20 and heat resistance 20 to a mecha suit made from it. It grants a +6 equipment bonus to Defense.

Crystal Carbon: "Grown" in orbital laboratories, crystal carbon is a composite fiber material that outperforms even neovulcanium on the battlefield. The production process is both delicate and expensive. It grants a +8 equipment bonus to Defense.

Megatanium: Sandwiched layers of crystal carbon and neovulcanium held in a magnetic matrix, megatanium is the current state of the art in armor. It's exceedingly hard and durable. It grants a + 10 equipment bonus to Defense.



Structural Options

Structural options differ from the mecha components described because structural options aren't tied to specific mechanisms on the mecha. They're overall attributes that affect all parts of the mecha equally, and they're usually more expensive as the mecha gets larger.

Stealth Kit: Based on high-tech "low observables" technology, this combination of sound baffles, heat dispersers, and nonreflective paint combines to give the mecha a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. Cost and the size penalty combine to make this structural option impractical on all but the smallest mechas.

Chameleon Coating: Holographic diodes cover the surface of the mecha, allowing it to change color to blend in with its surroundings, granting it a +20 circumstance bonus on Hide checks. As a side benefit, the mecha can display whatever insignia and markings it likes as a free action.

Advanced Diagnostics: Multiple redundant systems and the ability to detect and correct minor system faults make this mecha able to repair moderate damage. The mecha automatically heals 1 point of damage per round (but only the bonus hit points from the mecha are repaired, not damage to the character inside the mecha).

Nanorepair: State-of-the-art nanites swarm over the surface of the mecha at the first indication of damage. The mecha automatically heals 5 points of damage per round.

Basic Transform: As a full-round action, the mecha can transform into another shape. It's still obviously a mecha, but the components (and overall look) of the second form can be completely different. The second form must have the same number of build points as the original form or less. It must be the same size, made from the same material, and possess all the same structural options, including this one; otherwise it's essentially a completely different mecha. Some mechas, for example, have a flight form with top-grade thrusters and maneuver wings, and a combat form bristling with guns.

Advanced Transform: As the basic transform structural option, except that the form can appear to be something other than a mecha. Anything of approximately the same size—usually a car, starship, or other vehicle—can be the second form. Only a detailed examina-

Table 2–02: Build Point Cost

Structural Option	*Large*	*Huge*	*Gargantuan*	*Colossal*
Stealth Kit	500	1,500	4,500	13,500
Chameleon Coating	2,000	6,000	18,000	54,000
Advanced Diagnostics	3,000	6,000	15,000	32,000
Nanorepair	6,000	15,000	32,000	70,000
Basic Transform	3,000	6,000	13,500	24,000
Advanced Transform	6,000	12,000	27,000	48,000
Join with Metabot	1,500	3,000	—	—
Light Fortification	500	1,000	1,500	3,000
Moderate Fortification	2,000	4,000	7,500	15,000
Heavy Fortification	4,500	9,000	16,000	30,000
Greater Energy Resistance	1,500	3,000	6,000	12,000

Leave Room for the Pilot!

You should leave two slots vacant for the pilot of your mecha. On Large mechas, the pilot almost always occupies two of the following three slots: Helmet, Torso, and Back. But on Huge, Gargantuan, and Colossal mechas, the designer has more choice for placing the cockpit.

If you want to have copilots or passengers aboard your mecha, purchase the Extra Cockpit component below.

tion (Search DC 25) reveals that the alternate shape isn't what it appears to be. The mecha must transform back into its original shape to attack.

Join with Metabot: If a number of mechas all have this structural option, they can transform themselves into part of a larger robot—the metabot—as a full-round action. See Chapter 3 for rules for metabots.

Fortification: Mechas with this structural option have extra struts, shock dampeners, and tempest-hardening that lets them shake off attacks that would fell a normal mecha. Light fortification converts 25% of all critical hits into regular hits, moderate fortification converts 75% of all critical hits into regular hits, and heavy fortification converts all critical hits into regular hits.

Greater Energy Resistance: This mecha has been case-hardened at every stage in the manufacturing process against a specific energy type (chosen from heat, ion, laser, electricity, or plasma). When the mecha would normally take damage from that energy type, subtract 30 points of damage per round from the amount before applying. The greater energy resistance structural option stacks with the energy resistance from mechas made of refractalloy.

STEP 2: SELECT MECHA COMPONENTS

There are hundreds of different mecha components available—anything the finest minds in the Earth Global Alliance and the Colonial Confederation can dream up.

What follows is a sampling of the mecha components available. Each component description follows the same format.

Name: The most common name among mecha designers for the component, usually the brand name of the dominant megacorp model. As the war between the colonies and Earth heats up, new mecha contractors will offer similar designs under different names, and the military research departments of both factions will be working overtime to eke out even slight efficiencies in mecha designs. Some mecha pilots call components by more fanciful monikers. For example, the laser cannon is called the Typhoon 240 by the Yamatetsu Corporation, but the pilot of a particular mecha might call its laser cannon the "starbeam."

Slots: The number of body slots on the mecha required to install the component. If there are limitations on which body slots will accept a particular component, they are listed here. Flight thrusters, for example, are almost always installed in the back slot (a jetpack) or the boots slot (jet boots).

COMPONENT LIST

The following mecha components are divided by category.

Weapons-Ranged

AL3K Dragon flame thrower
Slots: 1
Cost: 3,000 bp
Activation: Attack action
Range: Emanates from mecha
Area: 12-m cone
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex half
Used primarily against soft, unarmored targets, the AL3K Dragon sprays wide areas with liquid flame. Anyone caught within the cone must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 13) or take 4d6 points of heat damage.

M-9 Barrage chaingun
Slots: 1, must be hand (or arm if Large) or shoulder (see text)
Cost: 2,145 bp; 40 bp per ammo belt
Activation: Attack action
Range Increment: 20 m
Target: Single target within 200 m, or autofire
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Essentially a high-tech medium machinegun, the M-9 Barrage has multiple barrels firing vulcan ammunition that deals 3d6 points of damage on a successful hit. The base unit has enough room for four 50-round ammo belts. Each additional slot you devote to ammo storage has room for six more ammo belts.

L-KEN Corona microwave beam
Slots: 1
Cost: 1,610 bp
Activation: Attack action
Range Increment: 6 m
Target: Single target within 50 m
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Cursed with short range and a marginal ability to get through most mecha armor, the L-KEN Corona is strictly a small, low-cost weapon option. It deals 5d6 points of heat damage on a successful hit.

Mk.1 Warpath recoilless rifle
Slots: 1 for rifle, must be hand (or arm if Large) or shoulder; 1 for each 20-round ammo bay

The size of some components depends on the size of the mecha they're installed in. If so, select the size appropriate for your mecha. For example, if you're purchasing an Excalibur energy sword for your Huge mecha, you need to select the Huge version of the component, which costs 5,600 build points.

Cost: How much it costs in build points to add the component to a mecha. The cost includes both the component itself and the labor and materials required to install it.

Activation: How long it takes to activate a particular component. It takes an attack action to activate most components.

Range/Range Increment: If a range is listed, it represents the maximum distance between the mecha and the target of the component. If a range increment is listed, it represents the distance at which accuracy begins to decline. Ranged attacks suffer a –2 penalty on attacks for each range increment beyond the first. Unless noted otherwise, most components with a range increment have a maximum range of ten increments.

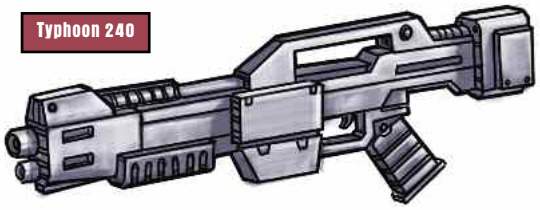
Target or Targets/Effect/Area: The entry starts with one of three headings: "Target," "Effect," or "Area." If the target of the component is "You," you do not receive a saving throw and there is no saving throw entry for the component. If a component is an autofire weapon, it'll be noted here.

Duration: How long a component continues to function before it needs to be reactivated, or how long the effect of a particular component lasts. A duration of "persistent" means the component functions until the mecha is destroyed or the pilot turns it off (generally a free action).

Saving Throw: Whether a component allows a saving throw, what type of saving throw it is, and the effect of a successful save.

Descriptive Text: This section describes how the component functions. If one of the previous portions of the description included "(see text)," this is where you'll find the explanation. If the component is one of a series of related components, you may have to refer to a different component for more information.

Typhoon 240



STEP 3: COMPILE THE NUMBERS

Now that you've created your mecha, it's time to add up all the numbers, calculating your new Strength score, attack bonuses, etc. Playing *Mecha Crusade* will be a frustrating experience if you don't create a second character sheet to use when your character is inside the mecha—there's just too much math to do in your head.

If you built a mecha that transforms or a mecha that can form a metabot, you probably want to create a character sheet for those forms as well.

SAMPLE MECHAS

The following mechas are relatively straightforward. Accordingly, they make good mechas for GM characters, or starting points for characters who want to customize an existing design.

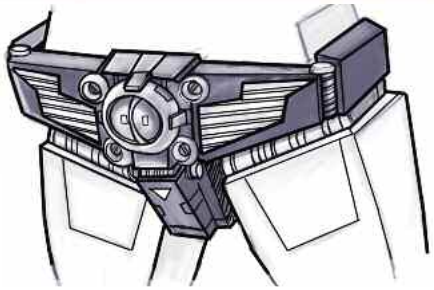
Cost: 4,170 bp for rifle; 85 bp per recoilless round
Activation: Attack action
Range Increment: 16 m
Target: Single target within 160 m, or autofire
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
This rapid-fire cannon relies on shells that detonate after hitting the target to deal its damage. A successful attack deals 10d6 points of damage.

LT-5 Longshot mass driver
Slots: 2 for driver, including hand (or arm if Large) or shoulder; 1 for each 10-round ammo bay
Cost: 7,470 bp for launcher; 150 bp per mass driver round
Activation: Attack action
Range Increment: 20 m
Target: Single target within 500 m
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
The Longshot fires a hyperaccelerated, superdense "bullet" at the target, dealing damage strictly through the massive kinetic energy the round imparts. With a successful ranged attack, a Longshot round deals 15d6 points of damage.

M-53 Barracuda rocket launcher
Slots: 1 for launcher, must be hand (or arm if Large) or shoulder; 1 for each six-rocket pack
Cost: 6,250 bp for launcher; 125 bp per rocket pack
Activation: Attack action
Range: 80 m
Area: 8-meter radius burst
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex half
The Barracuda rocket launcher aims "fire and forget" incendiary-tipped rockets at any point within range. When the rocket reaches the designated target point—which can be an actual target or a point in midair—it explodes, dealing 10d6 points of heat damage to everything within its burst radius. A successful Reflex save (DC 17) reduces damage by half.

M-55 Talon missile launcher
Slots: 1 for launcher, must be hand (or arm if Large) or shoulder; 1 for each

M-101 Crysanthemum Doomsday Device



Reliant-12

Large duralloy mecha.

Components: Barrage chaingun (left arm), Cobra laser gauntlet (right arm), Omicron thrusters (back), Oracle targeter (+1) (head), pilot (shoulders and torso).

Mecha provides hardness 15, +6 equipment bonus to defense, 100 bonus hit points, and +8 bonus to Strength. Fly 30 m (clumsy).

Cost: 10,445 build points.

Saber

Large duralloy mecha with join with metabot.

Components: Comet gatling (right arm and shoulders), Excalibur sword (left arm), Delta thrusters (boots), Oracle targeter (+2) (helmet), pilot (back and torso).

Mecha provides hardness 15, +6 equipment bonus to Defense, 100 bonus hit points, and +8 bonus to Strength. Fly 60 m (poor). Five Sabers combine to form one Dimension Knight metabot (see below).

Cost: 17,700 build points.

Silvereye

Huge duralloy mecha.

Components: Typhoon laser cannon (left hand and left arm), Defensor halberd (right hand), Delta thrusters (boots), Enigma sensors (visor), pilot (torso and back).

Mecha provides hardness 15, +6 equipment bonus to Defense, 200 bonus hit points, and +16 bonus to Strength. Fly 60 m (poor).

Cost: 23,200 build points.

How Many Build Points?

Your GM will tell you how many build points your mecha should have depending on the specifics of your *Mecha Crusade* campaign. Here's a list of appropriate build points for player characters of a given level.

Level	*Mecha build points*	*Level*	*Mecha build points*
1st	10,000	11th	40,500
2nd	11,500	12th	46,500
3rd	13,200	13th	53,500
4th	15,200	14th	61,500
5th	17,500	15th	70,800
6th	20,100	16th	81,400
7th	23,100	17th	93,600
8th	26,600	18th	107,600
9th	30,600	19th	123,800
10th	35,200	20th	142,300

GM characters typically have mechas with build points one level lower. A 10th-level GM character, for example, typically pilots a mecha with 30,600 build points. But that's a guideline, not a hard-and-fast rule (see Chapter 3 for more information on appropriate GM characters).

4-missile battery
Cost: 4,800 bp for launcher; 100 bp per missile
Activation: Attack action
Range: 800 m
Target: Single target
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
The most common missile launcher installed on mechas, the M-55 Talon enables the pilot to strike foes at a distance unmatched by most energy or projectile weapons. Each Talon missile deals 15d6 points of plasma damage on a successful hit. The missile's guidance system gives it an attack bonus of +10.

Typhoon 240 laser cannon
Slots: 2; including hand (or arm if Large), shoulder (+1,000 bp), or visor (+4,000 bp)
Cost: 3,400 bp
Activation: Attack action
Range Increment: 30 m
Target: Single target within 300 m
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
A basic, reliable laser cannon, the Typhoon 240 deals 10d6 points of laser damage to a target it strikes with a successful attack.

Tsunami 280 plasma cannon
Slots: 3; including hand (or arm if Large), shoulder (+1,000 bp), or visor (+4,000 bp)
Cost: 9,240 bp
Activation: Attack action
Range Increment/Range: 60 m/20 m
Target/Area: Single target within 600 m, or 20-m cone
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None or Reflex half (see text)
The Tsunami 280 plasma cannon has two aperture settings: focused beam and wide-angle. The mecha pilot can switch between settings as a move action. As a focused beam, the Tsunami requires a successful ranged attack. On the wide-angle setting, usable once per round, the plasma automatically hits everything within 20 meters, but those affected can make a Reflex save (DC 19) for half

Templar-Zero

Huge crystal-carbon mecha with light fortification.

Components: Tsunami plasma cannon (helmet, visor, and left arm), Talon missile launcher (shoulders), extra Talon missiles (right arm), Excalibur sword (right hand), Bulwark shield (left hand), Delta thrusters (boots), Kestrel wings (back), pilot (torso and belt).

Mecha provides hardness 20, +12 bonus to Defense, 250 bonus hit points, and +16 bonus to Strength. Fly 60 m (average).

Cost: 39,540 build points.

Bismarck

Gargantuan crystal carbon mecha with greater energy resistance (laser).

Components: Gladius beam (right hand, torso 1, torso 2), Cobra gauntlet (left hand), Talon missile launcher (left shoulder), extra Talon missiles (right shoulder), Reaper scythe (right hand, left hand; stowed); Delta thrusters (boots), Kestrel wings (upper back, lower back), Haven escape pod (helmet), pilot (visor and cranium).

Mecha grants hardness 20, +8 bonus to Defense, 500 bonus hit points, and a +24 bonus to Strength. Fly 60 m (average).

Cost: 69,900 build points.

Dimension Knight

Gargantuan megatanium mecha.

Components: 2 Comet gatlings (right hand, left hand, torso 1, torso 2), Thunderbolt spear (stowed; right hand) Delta thrusters (boots), Kestrel wings (upper back), Gazelle afterburners (lower back), Oracle targeter (+2) (visor), Enigma sensor (belt), copilot cockpits (right arm, right shoulder, left arm left shoulder. torso 1, torso 2, left leg, right leg), pilot (helmet, cranium)

Mecha grants hardness 30, +10 bonus to Defense, 800 bonus hit points, and a +24 bonus to Strength. Fly 60 m (average).

The Dimension Knight is a metabot composed of five Sabers.

Cost: 72,000 build points.

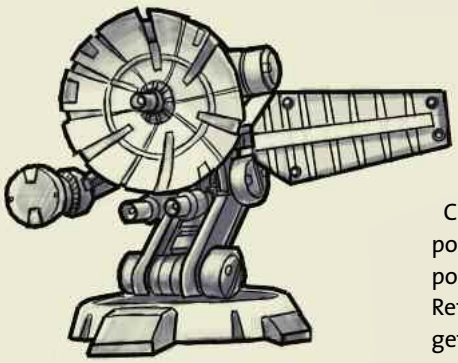
damage. Regardless of the setting, the Tsunami deals 12d6 points of plasma damage to targets it strikes.

CB-4 Cobra laser gauntlet
Slots: 1; must be hand (or arm if Large)
Cost: 3,050 bp
Activation: Attack action
Range Increment: 10 m
Target: Single target within 100 m
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
A compact laser weapon, the CB-4 Cobra laser gauntlet is primarily used as a back-up weapon. It lacks the range and stopping power of its larger counterparts such as the Typhoon. It deals 7d6 points of laser damage, but the beam diffuses harmlessly after 100 m.

Unlike most components that occupy only a Hand slot, the Cobra can't be disarmed.

M-2 Puma pop-up turret
Slots: 1
Cost: 5,000 bp
Activation: Attack action
Range Increment: 30 m
Target: Single target within 300 m
Duration: Instantaneous

MK-2 Enigma



Saving Throw: None
A triumph of miniaturization, the M-2 Puma packs significant wallop in a small, versatile (it can be installed in any body slot) package. It deals 8d6 points of plasma damage with a successful hit.

M-101 Crysanthemum doomsday device
Slots: 1
Cost: 6,400 bp
Activation: Standard action
Range: 0 m
Area: 16 m burst centered on you
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex half
The M-101 Crysanthemum's array of phosphorus lasers deal massive damage to the mecha's surroundings, then burn themselves out, making this a weapon of last resort. Everything within the Crysanthemum's area takes 8d6 points of heat damage and 8d6 points of laser damage. A successful Reflex save (DC 25) means that a target takes only half damage.

M-21 Comet gatling laser
Slots: 2; including hand (or arm if Large) or shoulder
Cost: 3,500 bp
Activation: Attack action
Range Increment: 30 m
Target: Single target within 300 m, or autofire
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
A rotating ring of laser cannons, the Comet is the most effective autofire laser available to mecha designers. It deals 8d6 points of laser damage

to a target it strikes with a successful attack.

KL-9E1 Gladius spectrum beam
Slots: 3; including hand
Cost: 14,000 bp
Activation: Attack action
Range Increment: 60 m
Target: Single target within 600 m
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
The Gladius spectrum beam simultaneously projects a laser beam, plasma beam, and ionic particle packet at the target—all riding on an electrical carrier wave. It deals 4d6 points of electrical damage, 8d6 points of laser damage, and 8d6 points of plasma damage to the target, plus 8d6 points of ion damage (see Chapter 3 for ion damage rules).

Weapons-Melee

H42a Excalibur energy sword
Slots: 1; must be hand (or arm if Large)
Cost: 4,200 bp (Large); 5,600 bp (Huge); 7,000 bp (Gargantuan); 8,400 bp (Colossal)
Activation: Attack action
Range: Touch
Target: Single target within reach
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
The H42a Excalibur is a mecha-sized melee weapon shaped like a sword. Because it is light and easy to wield, it grants a +3 enhancement bonus on attacks and damage. Of the damage it deals, half is regular damage and the rest is plasma damage.

Damage dealt with a successful melee attack depends on the size of the mecha wielding Excalibur: 4d6 points of damage for Large mechas, 8d6 for Huge, 12d6 for Gargantuan, and 16d6 for Colossal.

L38a Defensor halberd
Slots: 1; must be hand(or arm if Large)
Cost: 2,800 bp (Large); 5,000 bp (Huge); 7,200 bp (Gargantuan); 9,400 bp (Colossal)
Activation: Attack action
Range: Touch
Target: Single target within reach
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
The L38a Defensor is a massive carbon-alloy halberd. Damage dealt with a successful melee attack depends on the size of the mecha wielding Defensor: 2d10 points of damage for Large mechas, 4d10 for Huge, 6d10 for Gargantuan, and 8d10 for Colossal. The Defensor has an extra 2 meters of reach.

XJ-A Python electric whip
Slots: 1; must be hand(or arm if Large)
Cost: 3,200 bp (Large); 5,400 bp (Huge); 7,600 bp (Gargantuan); 9,800 bp (Colossal)
Activation: Attack action
Range: Touch
Target: Single target within reach
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
The XJ-A Python is an electrified cable with embedded servomotors that wrap around the target. The Python deals 2d10 points of electricity damage when wielded by a Large mecha, 4d10 points of electricity damage from a Huge mecha, 6d10 from a Gargantuan one, and 8d10 from a Colossal one. The Python has an extra 6 meters of reach.

When using the Python, you get a +2 equipment bonus on your opposed attack roll when attempting to disarm an opponent (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if you fail to disarm your opponent).

Because the whip can wrap around an enemy's leg or other limb, you can make a trip attack with it by succeeding at a melee touch attack. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop or detach the Python to avoid being tripped.

L38a Defensor

M-1 Thunderbolt plasma spear
Slots: 1; must be hand(or arm if Large)
Cost: 5,800 bp (Large); 7,900 bp (Huge); 10,200 bp (Gargantuan); 12,700 bp (Colossal)
Activation: Attack action
Range/Increment: Touch or 10 m
Target: Single target
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
The M-1 Thunderbolt is a versatile weapon that can be wielded in melee combat or thrown. In either case, it deals plasma damage to its target: 6d6 points of damage from a Large mecha, 8d6 from a Huge mecha, 10d6 Gargantuan, or 12d6 Colossal.

If thrown, the Thunderbolt returns to the mecha at the beginning of the next round.

PC-12 Pouncer armor-piercing claws
Slots: 0
Cost: 2,200 bp (Large); 2,600 bp (Huge); 3,600 bp (Gargantuan); 5,200 bp (Colossal)
Activation: Attack action
Range: Touch
Target: Single target
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Attaching sharp claws such as PC-12 Pouncers to the mecha's hands improves their melee attack damage at the expense of some fine motor ability. The claws convert the mecha's slam attack to a claw attack that does damage depending on the mecha's size: Large, 2d6; Huge 2d8; Gargantuan 4d6; and Colossal 4d10.

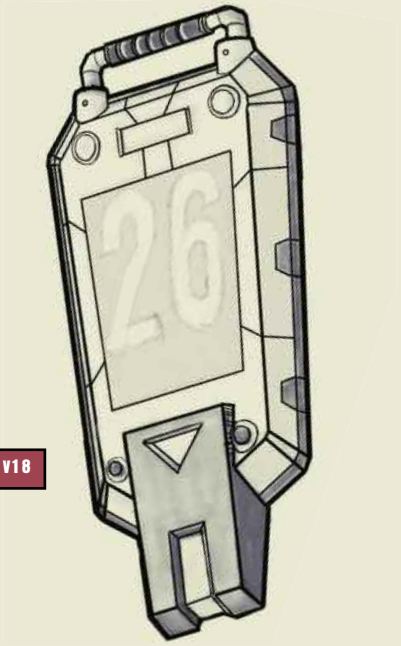
Mechas with PC-12 Pouncers installed suffer a –2 penalty on all Dexterity-based checks involving delicate hand movements.

RP-91 Reaper beam scythe
Slots: 2; must be hand (or arm if Large)
Cost: 6,600 bp
Activation: Attack action
Range Increment: Touch
Target: Single target within reach
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
The RP-91 Reaper is a crystal carbon shaft housing laser and magnetic field generators. When activated by the mecha pilot, it suspends a laser beam within a razor-thin magnetic "bubble" shaped like a farmer's scythe. It grants a +5 bonus on attack and damage rolls. Because the mecha wields it in both hands, the mecha can apply one and a half times its Strength bonus to the damage roll. Of the damage it deals, half is regular damage and half is laser damage.

Damage dealt with a successful melee attack depends on the size of the mecha wielding Defensor: 4d10 points of damage for Large mechas, 6d10 for Huge, 8d10 for Gargantuan, and 10d10 for Colossal.

Shields

Bulwark v18 defense shield
Slots: 1, must be arm
Cost: 2,000 bp
Activation: None
Range: Touch
Target: You
Duration: Persistent
Saving Throw: None
The Bulwark defense shield resembles a high-tech version of the shields worn by knights of old. Designed to absorb kinetic impacts and dissipate



Bulwark v18

energy attacks, it improves the mecha's equipment bonus to Defense by an additional +4.

Bastion v20 defense shield
Slots: 1, must be arm
Cost: 4,500 bp
Activation: None
Range: Touch
Target: You
Duration: Persistent
Saving Throw: None
The Bastion functions as the Bulwark, except it improves the mecha's equipment bonus to Defense by an additional +6.

Barricade v23 defense shield
Slots: 1, must be arm
Cost: 10,000 bp
Activation: None
Range: Touch
Target: You
Duration: Persistent
Saving Throw: None
The Bastion functions as the Bulwark, except it improves the mecha's equipment bonus to Defense by an additional +8 and it grants heat resistance 10 and ion resistance 10.

Mk.3 Vanguard point defense shield
Slots: 1, must be arm
Cost: 13,500 bp
Activation: None or free action (see text)
Range: Touch
Target/Area: You or 8-m radius centered on you (see text)
Duration: Persistent
Saving Throw: None
The Vanguard point defense shield protects its mecha as other shield components do, and it also uses broadcast magnetics to provide a semipermeable force field in a larger area. Designed to absorb kinetic impacts and dissipate energy attacks, it improves your mecha's equipment bonus to Defense by an additional +4 and provides a +2 deflection bonus to Defense to everyone within 8 meters of you, friend or foe. You can turn the deflection effect on or off once per round as a free action.

Flight Gear

Omicron 1100 thruster backpack
Slots: 1, must be back (Large or Huge); 2, must be back (Gargantuan or Colossal)
Cost: 2,000 bp (Large), 3,000 bp (Huge); 4,000 bp (Gargantuan); 5,000 gp (Colossal)
Activation: None
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Persistent

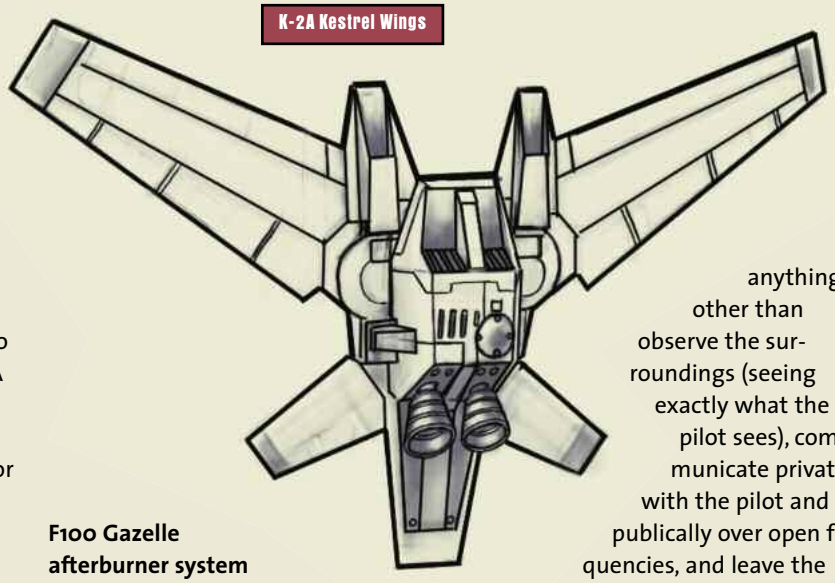
Saving Throw: None
The most basic flight system available, the Omicron 1100 combines vectored thrusters with military-grade avionics. Mechas with this component gain a fly speed of 30 meters (clumsy).

K-2E Kestrel maneuver wings
Slots: 1, must be back or shoulders (Large or Huge); 2, must be back or shoulders (Gargantuan or Colossal)
Cost: 1,000 bp (Large), 1,500 bp (Huge); 2,000 bp (Gargantuan); 2,500 gp (Colossal)
Activation: None
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Persistent
Saving Throw: None
Kestrel maneuver wings combine superior avionics and fly-by-wire technology with a number of finely-tuned vectored thrusters attached to vaguely wing-shaped appendages. A mecha with the Kestrel component improves its flight maneuverability by one category (clumsy to poor, poor to average, etc.)

D-8 Delta thrusters
Slots: 1, must be boots (Large, Huge, or Gargantuan); 2, must be boots or leg (Colossal)
Cost: 4,000 bp (Large), 6,000 bp (Huge); 8,000 bp (Gargantuan); 10,000 bp (Colossal)
Activation: None
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Persistent
Saving Throw: None
D-8 Delta thrusters combine more powerful fusion thrusters to grant a mecha a fly speed of 60 meters (poor).

Nimbus 3000 thrusters
Slots: 1, must be boots (Large or Huge); 2, must be boots or leg (Gargantuan or Colossal)
Cost: 8,000 bp (Large), 12,000 bp (Huge); 16,000 bp (Gargantuan); 20,000 gp (Colossal)
Activation: None
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Persistent
Saving Throw: None
The best thruster system currently available, Nimbus 3000 thrusters offer matchless velocity. They grant a mecha a fly speed of 80 meters (poor).

K-2A Kestrel Wings

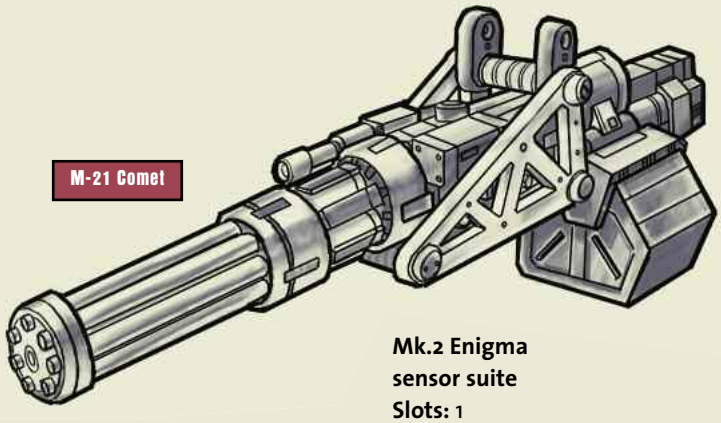


F100 Gazelle afterburner system
Slots: 1, must be torso, legs, or back
Cost: 800 bp (Large), 1.200 bp (Huge); 1,600 bp (Gargantuan); 2,000 gp (Colossal)
Activation: Free action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round
Saving Throw: None
By dumping raw fuel into the thruster system, the mecha with this component can gain a temporary speed boost. The mecha's fly speed is doubled for 1 round. To gain longer bursts of speed, purchase this component in multiples.

Other Components

Passenger Cockpit
Slots: 2
Cost: 500 bp
Activation: None
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Persistent
Saving Throw: None
This component is simply a comfortable place inside the mecha for a passenger to sit. The passenger can't do anything other than observe the surroundings (seeing exactly what the pilot sees), communicate privately with the pilot and publically over open frequencies, and leave the cockpit as a full-round action. As a move action, the pilot can prevent any of the above by shutting off the cameras, locking the hatch, etc.

Copilot Cockpit
Slots: 3
Cost: 2,000 bp
Activation: None
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Persistent
Saving Throw: None
Unlike a passenger cockpit, a copilot cockpit allows limited control of the mecha's functions, including the ability to fire the mecha's ranged weapons. Melee combat and movement remain under the control of the character in the main cockpit. Only one character may fire each ranged



M-21 Comet

weapon each round, but control of the weapons can be switched by any of the copilots as a free action.

As with a passenger cockpit, the pilot in the main cockpit can "lock out" any of the other cockpits as a move action. It takes a Computer Use check (DC 25 if the pilot is disabled, DC 35 if still active) to switch overall control to a copilot cockpit.

Mk. 7 Oracle targeting system
Slots: 1
Cost: 250 bp (+1), 1,000 bp (+2), 2,250 bp (+3), 4,000 bp (+4), 6,250 bp (+5)
Activation: Move action to activate or switch
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Persistent
Saving Throw: None
The standard computer-assisted targeting system, the Mk. 7 Oracle series combines holographic displays and heuristic target-prediction profiling to increase a mecha pilot's accuracy. An Oracle system adds an enhancement bonus on the ranged attack rolls for the mecha component selected by the pilot. The Oracle system has five different varieties (denoted Mk. 7a through Mk. 7e), each providing a different enhancement bonus.

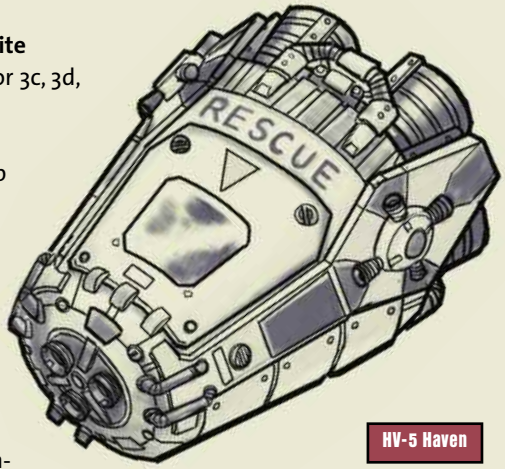
The mecha pilot can change which component the Oracle system is assisting as a move action.

Mk.2 Enigma sensor suite
Slots: 1
Cost: 2,800 bp
Activation: Standard action
Range: 60 m
Target: 8-m radius viewing area
Duration: 1 round
Saving Throw: None
Using a combination of thermal imaging, X-rays, and ultrasensitive vibration sensors, the Mk.2 Enigma component enables the mecha pilot to effectively see through solid objects. Fine details can't be picked up, but a mecha with an Enigma suite could tell, for example, that three people were crouched behind a closed door, or that an escape tunnel runs from one building to another. Mechas with an Enigma suite also ignore all concealment, because the sensor's computers can filter out environmental effects like fog, smoke, and vegetation.

Mk.3 Delphi sensor/safety suite
Slots: 2 (for 3a and 3b) or 3 (for 3c, 3d, and 3e)
Cost: 4,000 bp (3a), 7,000 bp (3b), 12,000 bp (3c), 20,000 bp (3d), 30,000 (3e)
Activation: Standard action
Range: 60 m
Target: 8-m radius viewing area
Duration: 1 round
Saving Throw: None
The Mk.3 Delphi component combines a Mk. 2 Enigma sensor (described above) with a heuristic collision avoidance system, enhanced pilot restraints, and a series of adrenal and noradrenal autoinjectors for the pilot. In addition to the sensory enhancement, the Delphi provides a resistance bonus on all saving throws: +1 for the Mk.3a version up to +5 for the Mk.3e.

HV-5 Haven escape pod
Slots: 1
Cost: 750 bp
Activation: Free action or move action (see text)
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 3 rounds
Saving Throw: None
The HV-5 Haven escape pod jettisons the cockpit and the mecha pilot from the rest of the mecha (typically because the mecha is about to be destroyed). The pilot can activate it as a move action and move normally at the Haven's fly speed. Or the Haven can be activated as a free action, in which case it flies under the pilot's direction up to its fly speed, but can move no further that round.

The Haven escape pod has a fly speed of 30 meters (clumsy), 50 hp, hardness 10, and a Defense of 18. Three rounds after it jettisons from the mecha, it runs out of fuel, landing or crashing as appropriate.



HV-5 Haven

CHAPTER THREE: RUNNING MECHA CRUSADE

Most of the rules changes for Mecha Crusade exist because the game employs the d20 Modern rules, but uses them in a futuristic setting. ***But it isn't necessary to come up with new rules just because an element of mecha anime looks futuristic. The hovercars of Martian cities might look different than the sedans and coupes of today, but they behave the same. A smart GM can call it a hovercar, but use the existing vehicles in the*** **d20 Modern Roleplaying Game,** ***and no one will be the wiser.***

PERSONAL COMBAT

The only real difference between a modern-day battle and one in the year 2053 is the nature of the personal weapons and armor. And while laser pistols and plasma rifles may look flashy, they really don't behave much differently—or perform much better—than their equivalents in 2003. In the mecha genre, personal firearms can be remarkably ineffective, with squads of soldiers missing a foe mere meters away. After all, there has to be a reason to climb into that 5-meter tall experimental mecha waiting in Hangar 9.

The following ranged weapons are generally available in the universe of *Mecha Crusade*. No new melee weapons are prevalent other than the ones mechas use (described in Chapter 2). For a description of what these statistics mean, see Chapter 4 of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*.

Like personal weapons, personal armor hasn't advanced much in the fifty years between the present day and *Mecha Crusade*—unless you count the mechas themselves, of course. The following armor types are generally available in the futuristic setting. Note that there's no heavy armor listed. Mechas fulfill that need rather nicely.

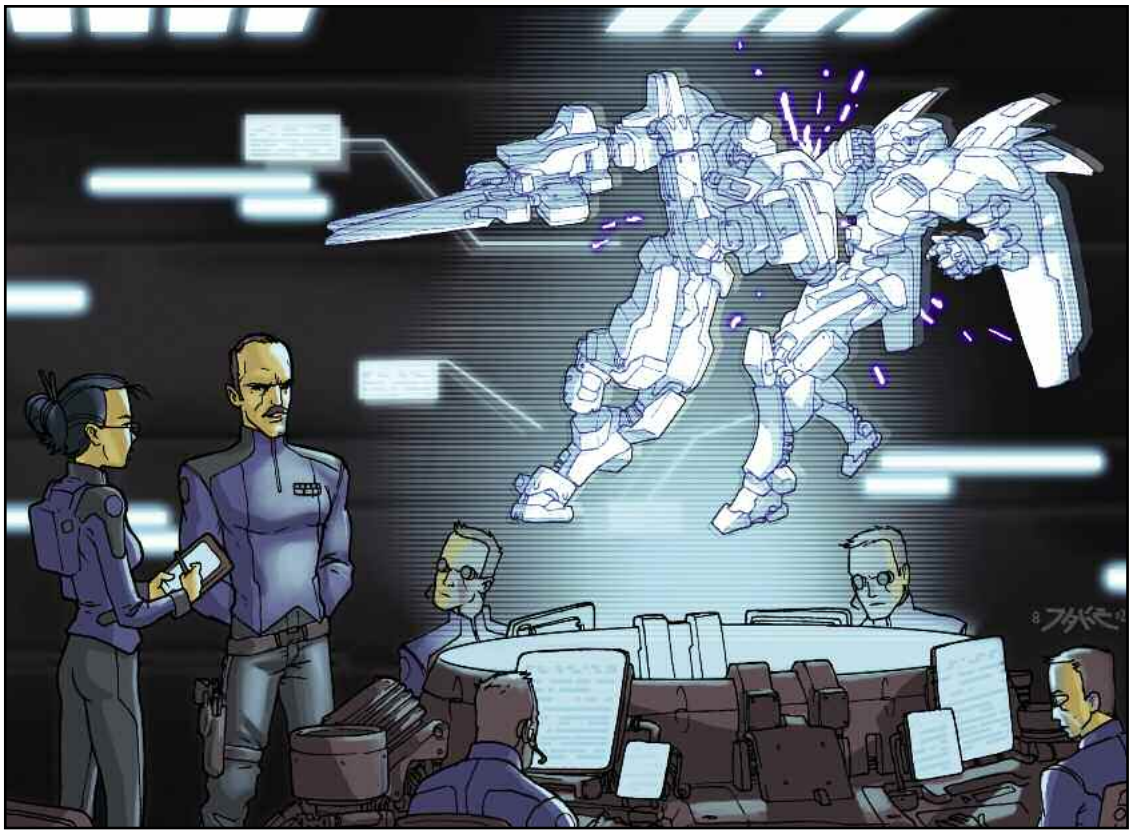
Getting in and out of Mechas

It takes a full-round action to get into a mecha, and a standard action to activate its various systems so it can

Table 3–01: Ranged Weapons

Weapon	*Damage*	*Critical*	*Damage Type*	*Range Increment*	*Rate of Fire*	*Magazine*	*Size*	*Weight*	*Purchase DC*	*Restriction*
Handguns (require the Personal Firearms Proficiency feat)										
Laser burner	2d6	20	Laser	4 m	Single	2 cell	Tiny	1 lb.	14	Lic (+1)
Laser pistol	2d6	20	Laser	12 m	S	10 cell	Small	3 lb.	15	Lic (+1)
Laser blaster	2d6	20	Laser	12 m	S, A	20 cell	Med	3 lb.	18	Res (+2)
Heavy laser pistol	2d8	20	Laser	16 m	S	10 cell	Med	4 lb.	18	Lic (+1)
Longarms (require the Personal Firearms Proficiency feat)										
Commando carbine	*2d6	20	Laser	20 m	S, A	30 cell	Large	7 lb.	20	Res (+2)
Plasma rifle	2d8	20	Plasma	30 m	S, A	30 cell	Large	8 lb.	16	Res (+2)
Sniper rifle	2d12	20	Plasma	50 m	S	10 cell	Huge	35 lb.	22	Lic (+1)
Heavy Weapons (each requires a specific Exotic Firearms Proficiency feat)										
Light plasma cannon	2d12	20	Plasma	44 m	A	200 cell	Huge	75 lb.	22	Mil (+3)
Personal rocket launcher	10d6	—	—	60 m	1	4 int	Large	10 lb.	17	Mil (+3)
Laser gatling	2d8	20	Laser	40 m	A	300 cell	Huge	22 lb.	21	Mil (+3)

*This mastercraft weapon grants a +1 bonus on attack rolls.



Jake Parker

move and fight. It takes a full-round action to get out of a mecha, unless you have a Haven escape pod, in which case it's a free action.

MECHA COMBAT

Combat between mechas functions much as it does between characters in their street clothes. Characters piloting mechas are simply much larger and stronger than they otherwise would be, and they can wield truly frightening weapons. But they still obey the essential rules of *d20 Modern* combat. They still threaten squares within their reach, take move actions and attack actions, duck behind cover for a Defense bonus, etc.

In some respects, however, mecha combat is different. The following sections describe specific special situations involving mechas.

Piloting and Movement

In general, mecha pilots don't need to make Pilot checks to steer their mechas around the battlefield. But sometimes, a high bonus in the Pilot skill can be a lifesaver.

The following are some of the ways you can use the Pilot skill in combat:

- When you're trying to move past a foe without provoking an attack of opportunity, you use your Tumble bonus or Pilot bonus, whichever is lower.
- The Pilot skill is used to defend against a trip attempt in the air.

Table 3–02: Armor

Armor	*Type*	*Equipment Bonus*	*Nonprof. Bonus*	*Armor Penalty*	*Speed (12 m)*	*Weight*	*Purchase DC*	*Restriction*
Light Armor								
Leather Jacket	Impromptu	+1	+1	–0	12 m	4 lb.	10	—
Light duraweave	Concealable	+2	+1	–0	12 m	2 lb.	13	Lic (+1)
Duraweave vest	Concealable	+3	+1	–2	12 m	3 lb.	14	Lic (+1)
Medium Armor								
Reinforced vest	Concealable	+4	+2	–3	10 m	4 lb.	15	Lic (+1)
Flight suit	Tactical	+5	+2	–4	10 m	8 lb.	16	Lic (+1)
EVA flight suit	Tactical	+6	+2	–5	10 m	10 lb.	17	Lic (+1)

Table 3–04: Flight Maneuverability

	Perfect	*Good*	*Average*	*Poor*	*Clumsy*
Minimum Forward Speed	None	None	Half	Half	Half
Hover	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Fly Backward	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Reverse	Free	–2 m	—	—	—
Turn	Any	90°/2 m	45°/2 m	45°/2 m	45°/4 m
Turn in Place	Any	+90°/–2 m	+45°/–2 m	No	No
Maximum Turn	Any	Any	90°	45°	45°
Up Angle	Any	Any	60°	45°	45°
Up Speed	Full	Half	Half	Half	Half
Down Angle	Any	Any	Any	45°	45°
Down Speed	Double	Double	Double	Double	Double
Between Down and Up	0	0	2 m	4 m	8 m

• A successful Pilot check can pull a mecha out of a stall (see the Flying Mechas section).
• A successful Pilot check (DC 10) allows a character in a copilot cockpit to grant the main pilot a +2 bonus on attacks, +2 bonus on Pilot checks, or +2 bonus to Defense.

Flying Mechas

The vehicle rules in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* are entirely appropriate for ground cars and other normal forms of transportation. But even a clumsy mecha is more maneuverable than a typical vehicle.

On the ground, mechas move just like characters. They can turn at any time, move in any direction, and stop on a dime. But in the air, they're more limited.

Most flying mechas have to slow down at least a little to make a turn, and many are limited to fairly wide turns and must maintain a minimum forward speed. Each flying mecha has a maneuverability, as shown on table 3–04: Flight Maneuverability. The components on a flying mecha determine its maneuverability rating.

Minimum Forward Speed: If a flying mech fails to maintain its minimum forward speed, it must land at the end of its movement. If it is too high above the ground to land, it falls straight down, descending 60 meters in the first round of falling. If this distance brings it to the ground, it takes falling damage. If the fall doesn't bring the mecha to the ground, the pilot must succeed at a Pilot check (DC 20) to recover. Otherwise it falls another 120 meters. If it hits the ground, it takes falling damage, Otherwise, it has another chance to recover on its next turn.

Hover: The ability to stay in one place while airborne.

Fly Backward: The ability to fly backward.

Reverse: A mecha with good maneuverability uses up 2 meters of its speed to start flying backward.

Turn: How much the flying mecha can turn after covering the stated distance.

Turn in Place: A creature with good or average maneuverability can "spend" some of its speed to turn in place.

Maximum Turn: How much the mecha can turn in any one space.

Up Angle: The angle at which the mecha can turn in any one space.

Up Speed: How fast the mecha can climb.

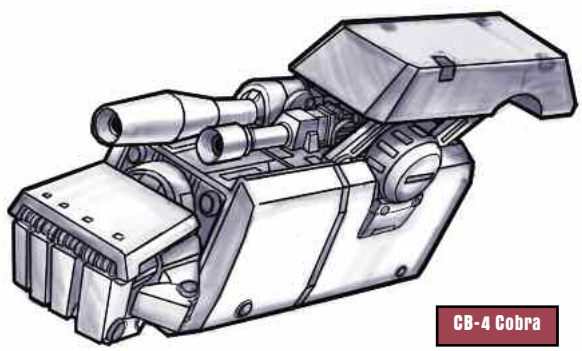
Down Angle: The angle at which the mecha can descend.

Down Speed: A flying mecha can fly down at twice its normal flying speed.

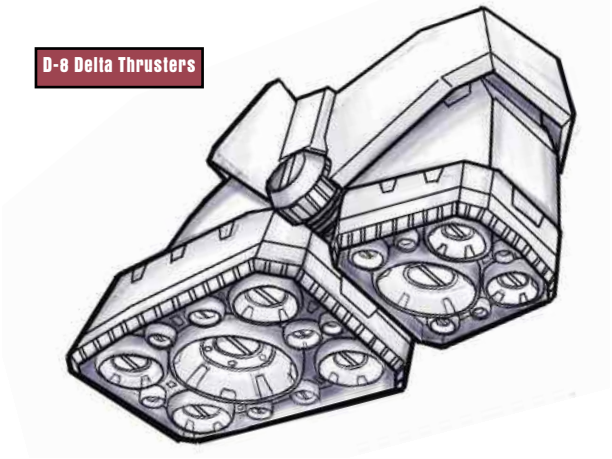
Between Down and Up: An average, poor, or clumsy flier must fly level for a minimum distance after descending and before climbing. Any flying mecha can begin descending after a climb without an intervening distance. Finally all mechas have no minimum forward speed and can hover.

A Note on Scale

Because it's part of the mecha genre, we've adopted meters rather than feet as the base unit of linear measure. For our purposes, 5 feet equal 2 meters. Once you've been playing Mecha Crusade for a while, the notion of a "2-meter adjustment" will seem perfectly normal.



CB-4 Cobra


D-8 Delta Thrusters

Mechas in Space

In outer space, mechas fly just as they do in the atmosphere, with three exceptions. First, all flying mechas improve by one maneuverability category (poor becomes average, average becomes good, etc.). Second, all mechas can ascend and descend without regard to the limitations on Table 3–04, and their speed remains unchanged if they do so. Finally, all mechas can hover and none have a minimum forward speed.

Critical Hits

Whenever you roll a natural 20 on an attack roll against a mecha and confirm your hit with a second successful attack roll, you have scored a critical hit. Likewise, when a mecha rolls a natural 1 on a saving throw against a damaging effect, a critical hit has occurred .

Unlike critical hits to characters not in mechas, a critical hit to a mecha may damage the mecha pilot or some of the individual components of the mecha.

When a critical hit occurs, roll on the following table.

d%	*Effect*
01–40	Extra damage. Attack deals double damage.
41–60	Flaw in armor found. Damage applied to pilot, copilots, or passengers (determine whom randomly), not bonus hit points from mecha structure.
61–80	Component destroyed. Determine which one randomly.
81–100	Control systems failure. Mecha is stunned for 1d4 rounds.

Critical hits against characters not in mechas follow the normal rules for the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*.

Ranged Attacks and Attacks of Opportunity

Mechas only provoke attacks of opportunity from creatures of their size or larger (including other mechas) when they fire a ranged weapon while in a threatened area.

Disarming, Stowing, and the Hand Slot

Any component that uses the Hand slot—and only the Hand slot—can be stowed magnetically against the mecha or in a storage compartment as a move action. This frees up the hand to perform more delicate manipulation (such as opening a door or pressing a button) or grabbing another mecha component.

Conversely, other mechas can disarm you of a component that's only in your hand slot. Other items, such as ones mounted on both the Hand and Arm slots, can't be disarmed.

You can design a mecha that has more components for the Hand slots than Hand slots available. You just can't use them all at once.

Ion Weapons

Ion weapons don't damage a mecha when they hit. Instead, they short out important control systems and can render a mecha motionless.

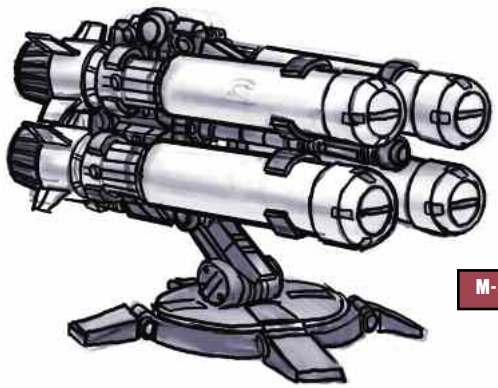
When an ion weapon hits, calculate damage normally, but don't apply it to the mecha. Instead, consult the following chart.

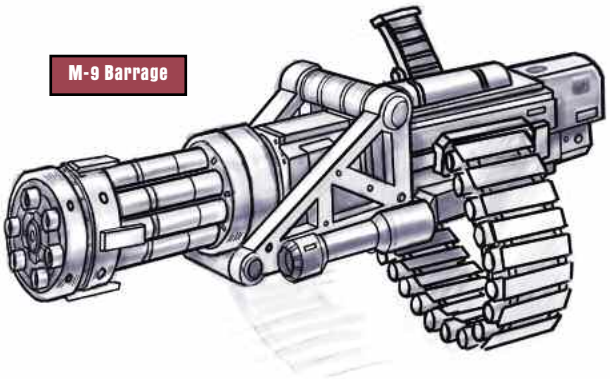
Damage	*Effect*	*Repair Check DC*
11–20	Superficial ionization	10
21–40	Minor ionization	15
41–60	System ionization	20
61–80	Major ionization	25
81+	Catastrophic ionization	30

Ionized mechas are treated as stunned with two exceptions: The pilot can take free actions that require no actual movement or attacks, and the pilot can take a full-round action to make a Repair check to dissipate the ionization. If the Repair check succeeds, the mecha can act normally on the following round.

Missile Weapons

Missile weapons (such as Talon missiles) function differently in combat than lasers and mecha fists do. Unlike


M-55 Talon



them, a missile does not necessarily resolve its attack immediately. It must close the distance between itself and its target, which might take a number of rounds.

Firing a Missile Weapon

A missile can be fired at any line-of-sight target within the range listed for the missile launcher component. The attacker designates the missile's target when the missile is deployed; the attacker cannot change the target after the missile has been fired. The missile moves 140 meters each round (average maneuverability) and cannot adjust its velocity for any reason. It takes the most direct route to its target and stops only when it hits its target, runs out of fuel (see below), or explodes. A missile acts on the same initiative count as when it was launched and begins acting as soon as it is fired. A missile follows the same movement rules as flying mechas (including the better maneuverability in space). It will follow its target even if it loses line of sight to it.

Resolving Missile Attacks: When a missile enters the same square as its target, it makes an attack roll using the bonus listed in the component description. If the attack fails, the missile carries on with the rest of its movement (if any), though it cannot attempt to attack the target again in the same round.

Missile Fuel: A missile operates for 6 rounds before it runs out of fuel and burns out. It can make several attempts to hit its target in that time, though not more than one attempt each action.

Avoiding Missile Attacks

Any mecha can attempt to destroy a missile before it reaches the target. All missile weapons have a Defense of 22 and 30 hit points. A missile can suffer ion damage; if it does, it flies straight ahead until it runs out of fuel.

Missiles are fast, but some mechas are faster. It's possible to simply move away from a missile until it runs out of fuel.

Another way to avoid a missile is to force it to strike another target. Because a missile doesn't slow down and flies directly at a target, it's possible for particularly maneuverable mechas to turn more sharply than the missile can match. If the missile runs into something while it's moving, it makes an attack roll (if the other object is a mecha or creature) or simply explodes (if it's a large object like a building).

Multiple Cockpits

Especially in bigger mechas, more than one person can fit inside. Passenger cockpits just allow someone to ride in comfort, communicate with the pilot, and see outside via fiber-optic cameras. Accordingly, passengers have little impact on combat.

Copilot cockpits, on the other hand, allow someone to take an active hand in operating the mecha. The character in the main cockpit is the pilot and controls the overall movement and melee combat for the mecha. Characters in copilot cockpits can fire any of the mecha's ranged weapons, using their attack bonus (as modified by the mecha's size and equipment modifier, if applicable).

A copilot also can grant the main pilot a +2 bonus on attacks or Pilot checks or to Defense if she succeeds at a Pilot check (DC 10).

Copilots act on the initiative point of the pilot in the main cockpit. Only one character can fire a particular weapon each round.

Only the main pilot takes damage if the bonus hit points from the mecha itself are exhausted. Copilots can only be hurt with a critical hit (see below).

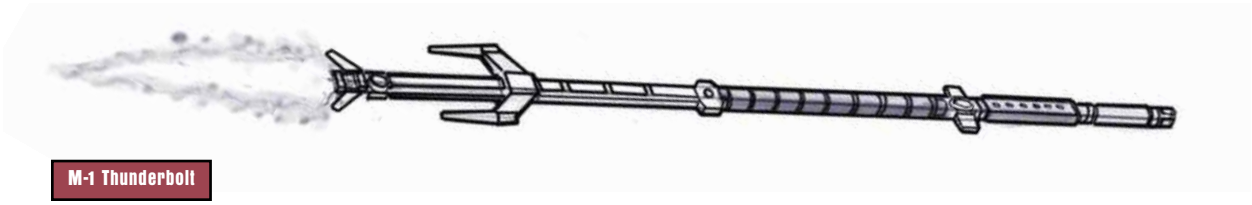
Metabots

As a full-round action, any mecha with the appropriate structural option can join with a metabot—a mecha composed of smaller mecha.

Real-Life Science and Mechas

Mecha Crusade technology intentionally doesn't work the way it "should" in the real world. Weapons have unrealistically short ranges, power supplies are almost nonexistent, and—true confessions time—many of the "scientific" descriptions of the weapons are just collections of buzzwords. History hasn't seen an effective animal-shaped mecha since the Trojan Horse.

The source material embraces these genre conventions, and so does the *Mecha Crusade* game. Even though modern missiles can hit targets from miles away, mecha combat is often a face-to-face encounter. And it makes for a better game if the mechas have melee combat as a tactical option, rather than simply lobbing shells at radar-screen blips.



M-1 Thunderbolt

Only Large and Huge mechas can form mechas. From three to six Large mechas form a Gargantuan metabot, and three to six Huge mechas form a Colossal metabot. The mechas that combine to form the metabot can only do so in one specific way. If any mechas are missing, the metabot can't be formed.

Metabots are essentially completely different mechas; they don't need to have the same weapons or other components as the smaller mechas (although they often do). They are almost always made from the same material and have the same structural options as the mechas that joined together to make them (except for the join with metabot structural option, which they're too large to have). The metabot must also have one copilot cockpit for each mecha that joined together to form it.

The advantage to the metabot is its immense build point budget. Each mecha contributes 80% of its build points to the metabot. For example, four Huge 20,000 build point mechas could join together to form a Colossal 64,000 build point metabot.

One of the pilots is responsible for movement and melee combat of the metabot; which mecha pilot becomes the main pilot for the metabot is decided when the metabot is designed. Other characters in copilot cockpits can operate ranged weapons, other components, or assist the main pilot as described in the Multiple Cockpits section above. All the copilots act on the main pilot's initiative point.

A character in any of the metabot's copilot cockpits can break the metabot back into its constituent mechas as a full-round action.

Damage and Metabots: If some of the mechas that comprise the metabot took damage before joining, the metabot has correspondingly fewer hit points as well. Subtract only damage the mechas took; characters inside the mechas may still be hurt, but their missing hit points aren't reflected in the metabot's hit point total.

If the metabot takes damage, then breaks down into its original mechas, simply divide the damage taken equally among the mechas.

Niklas Jansson

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MECHA CRUSADE CAMPAIGN

Fifty years from now, the solar system is at war. ***Thriving colonies on Mars, the asteroid belt, and the moons of Jupiter have forcibly severed ties with an overcrowded, authoritarian Earth. Desperate for raw materials and concerned that political unrest will spread to the teeming masses at home, Earth's government has vowed to bring the colonies back in line. But just as strident are the colonial leaders, who see their future among the stars.***

War was declared months ago, but so far only a handful of skirmishes have been fought as both sides refit their factories to crank out weapons and armor. This war will be fought in the darkness of outer space, the polluted megacities of Earth, and the frozen sands of Mars. Never has a war had such inhospitable, dangerous battlefields.

Thus, mechas will be the dominant force in the coming war. Brave pilots can take them everywhere from the depths of the oceans on Europa to the heat of greenhouse-choked Venus. They wield weapons no ordinary soldier could lift, much less use. Their jetpacks give them unparalleled maneuverability and speed. And they can shrug off bombardments that level the landscape around them. As the war progresses, most generals will learn that the only way to stop a mecha is with another mecha.

The Solar System War of 2053 provides a mix of mecha and nonmecha adventures for *d20 Modern* characters. Characters can act as spies, infiltrating enemy research facilities to steal prototypes and experimental designs. They can try their hand at diplomacy, making sure that the fragile alliance between colonies scattered across the solar system stays united against the oppression of the Earth government.

But eventually characters will strap themselves into their mechas, where they'll fight everything from dug-in Earth troopers to starship interceptors to Earth's mecha-equipped elite soldiers. They'll fight in the ocean depths, in outer space, and among rubble-strewn cities and colony domes. If the heroes fight well, Earth trooper and Colonist partisan alike will recognize their mechas on sight.

THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS, IN BRIEF

It's easier to predict the future a century away than a year away, so *Mecha Crusade* deliberately leaves vague the early part of the 21st century. Suffice it to say that the trend of globalism picks up speed, and by the 2030s most people identify themselves with super-regional entities (European Union, Organization of African Unity, etc.) rather than nation-states. National identity remains important for cultural reasons—Germans still speak German, and Americans still celebrate Thanksgiving—but nations fade as political entities, with most important decisions made on the regional or global level.

The 2020s and 2030s are decades of unparalleled exploration of the solar system. Beginning with a manned mission to Mars in 2020, experimental habitats grow into research installations and eventually into full-fledged colonies. When the Solar System War begins in 2053, 50 million live beyond Earth, mostly on the moon and Mars. Low-gravity manufacturing techniques and exotic material available only off-Earth transform these colonies into economic powerhouses, boasting a standard of living that only the enclaves of Earth's ultra-rich can match.

Back on Earth, overpopulation runs rampant. Shortages of fossil fuels, food, and other raw materials create an economy of scarcity, and billions go to bed hungry. Earth's governments become monolithic, authoritarian regimes in response to crisis upon crisis. By 2039, the trade balance between Earth and the Colonies has reversed, with the colonies sending more goods to Earth than they receive in return.

A dictatorial Earth government beset by deadly pollution, ecological crises, and a restive populace relies on economic support from the Colonies throughout the 2040s. The colonies ship high-tech goods, potent medicines, and raw materials (mostly metals and uranium from the asteroid belt) down the gravity well to earth—at first earning handsome profits for their efforts. But gradually Earth insists on more advantageous terms, and by 2050 the colonies are shipping much of their wealth to Earth and receiving nothing in return.

In the mid-2040s, the first "solar" generation comes of age: colonists' children born and raised away from Earth.

Chris Grun

They see their parents working themselves to exhaustion and their native worlds strip-mined—all so Earth doesn't have to solve its own problems. Accordingly, they question the whole Earth/Colonies relationship. Once out from under the thumb of Earth, the Colonies would thrive like never before (say the young) or at least like they did in the 2030s (say older colonists).

While the colonists debate their future, Earth's leaders listen...and they don't like what they hear. Paranoid about disruptions to the flow of goods, Earth's secret police ruthlessly crack down on colonial dissenters. Some are imprisoned, some are forced back to Earth, and some just disappear. Earth mobilizes division after division of "peacekeepers," and every installation of any size among the Colonies soon has an Earth garrison with a mission to crush dissent and keep the goods flowing.

Almost overnight, the future of the colonies shifts from an abstract philosophical question to a cause worth fighting for. Even apolitical or Earth-loyal colonists are appalled at armies in the streets, ruinous tribute payments, and series of funerals for assassinated colonial leaders. Colony after colony announces its intention to force the garrisons out, end mandatory shipments to Earth, and sever political ties with the mother planet. Negotiations throughout 2052 just ratchet up the tension. And the war begins in February of 2053 when an Earth garrison, seeking "terrorists," seizes control of one of the Moon's colony domes. They depressurize it, killing an estimated 20,000 colonists.

THE SITUATION TODAY

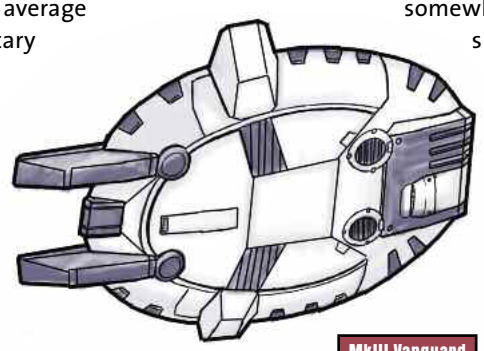
Since February, a few short battles have been fought, but both sides are gearing up for total war. Some of Earth's garrisons withdrew rather than be surrounded by a hostile populace, millions of miles from home. Others tried to seize control of the colonies they guarded, and some just fortified their bases, waiting for further orders. On both sides of the conflict, rumors swirl that the opening moves of a massive invasion are just days away—although the rumors never seem to agree on who's invading whom.

Earth outnumbers the Colonies by a 200 to 1 margin, but the colonists have some key advantages. They have a stronger industrial base, and they're spread out over hundreds of millions of miles. They also have a well-educated, loyal populace strongly motivated to win the war. Earth, on the other hand, has an overwhelming numerical advantage but a population that's ill-fed, ill-equipped, and disinclined to make sacrifices for a war among the stars.

The Colonies face a set of significant problems, however. The fact that they're spread out on two moons, a

planet, and hundreds of smaller installations across the solar system is a double-edged sword that makes reinforcement and coordination difficult. And the colonial leadership on Europa doesn't necessarily consult with their Martian or Lunar counterparts before launching an offensive. Earth's military, on the other hand, is omnipresent and well-organized. The average Colonial soldier is better at her job than the average Earth draftee, but the Colonial military lacks the training and expertise of Earth's elite units.

Finally, it's a bit of an oversimplification to describe the Solar System War as a battle between Earth and the Colonies. Some minor nations on Earth provide tacit or overt support to colonial aspirations, and some smaller installations across the solar system stayed loyal to Earth. And some places (most notably Switzerland and the Lagrange Space Habitat) maintain strict neutrality.



MkIII Vanguard

ADVENTURES DURING THE WAR

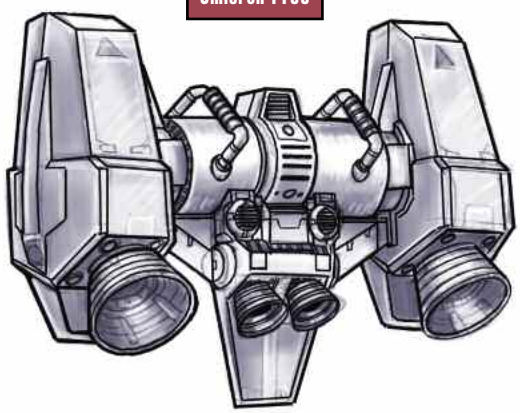
The number of missions that characters can undertake to advance the cause of freedom is limitless. The following are some broad categories.

- **Opening Moves.** The heroes are just getting used to their mechas when the war begins, and likewise the two armies are just learning the importance of mechas in combat. The heroes may face some nonmechanized opposition, such as Earth garrisons they must dislodge from an important colony site. Fighting ordinary troopers armed with guns (and, more dangerously, crew-served heavy weapons) gets the characters (and consequently the players) used to the power of their mechas. The characters might also do some impromptu diplomatic work, convincing smaller installations to join the cause of colonial freedom. Maybe the heroes are ordinary civilians, and in their first "mission" they take it upon themselves to sneak into an Earth-loyal armory and steal the mechas in storage there. Whatever you decide, you should give the players a sense of the versatility of their mechas by creating encounters that ask them to move around, absorb damage that would kill unarmored characters, and do things they couldn't otherwise do.
- **The Big Invasion.** One of the first major events in a *Mecha Crusade* campaign will be a massive invasion that begins the war in earnest. Either side can invade the other; Earth could attempt to seize the Martian cliff-domes of Valles Marineris, or the Colonies could drop an army onto Madagascar to try to destroy the space-launch facilities there. This will be a massive operation, involving tens of thousands of troopers and thousands of mechas. Assign the characters a limited but important objective during the invasion. They may have to seize (or guard) a stationary missile site, strike a heavily-guarded supply depot, or even launch a diversion attack somewhere far away from the actual invasion. The overall battle will probably be a chaotic, see-saw affair, and the heroes will probably have to act without support from the rest of the military for several days. Adventures built around invasions are particularly good for players who want to feel like they're part of a larger effort, and players who are keenly interested in the overall status of the war.
- **Patrolling the Front.** Whether the big invasion is successful or not, the front will eventually stabilize, and the heroes may be assigned to guard some part of it. This is a good opportunity to ground the characters in a particular environment, whether it's terrestrial or in outer space. The characters will learn the finer points of fighting in the particular environment while they deal with large assaults, attempted infiltrations, enemy patrols, and massive bombardments. It's also a good opportunity to give characters a wide variety of foes, including enemy mechas, masses of unarmored troops, and vehicles such as fighter planes and starships. The front is a versatile place for adventure. At a moment's notice, the heroes can be thrust into almost any tactical situation.
- **Commando Raid.** These missions, among the most dangerous, send the characters far behind enemy lines to perform a mission of strategic importance: sabotage an under-construction battle cruiser, destroy a supply depot, or capture high-ranking leaders in the Earth army or secret police. Commando raids often employ stealth and subterfuge, often disguising themselves to reach their target. Because such missions take place away from the front, the commandos are dangerously exposed to a massive counterattack. Most commando teams rely on the speed and maneuverability of mechas to escape an entire enemy army focusing on them. Because they offer concentrated small-group battles and a reasonable degree of autonomy, commando raids are good missions for players who relish combat after combat.
- **Cloak-and-Dagger Work.** Spies are invaluable in wartime, and characters with useful skills (Hide, Move Silently, Disguise, Bluff) can serve the war effort by uncovering enemy plans, stealing prototypes, and reporting

troop and supply movements. Most spy work occurs outside a mecha, but if the characters are seeking new mecha plans or commandeering experimental enemy mechas, they'll get the chance to strap themselves into armor—probably just in time for the climax to the adventure. Spy adventures are particularly exciting for players who want to spend time inside and outside of their mechas.

- **Cadre Assignments.** If the characters ascend through the ranks and develop a reputation as effective mecha pilots, they may be given new recruits to train. The characters must teach the finer points of mecha combat to their students, keep class rivalries and other intrigues to a minimum, and shepherd them through their first battles. For players who enjoy command and military planning, cadre missions are particularly effective—they get to actually command a bunch of NPCs, and they can set up training regimens and battle plans as they see fit. But other players might find it cumbersome to have to worry about a bunch of low-level NPCs.
- **Guerrilla War.** For one side or another, the war may eventually go poorly. The characters may find themselves forced into hiding—especially if they're in a remote part of Earth or on an isolated colony. From a hidden base, the heroes will use their mechas to strike at the enemy's supplies and rear-echelon troops, disappearing before they can mount a counterstrike. The characters will have to operate without access to the supplies, facilities, and gear of an organized army, but they have a degree of autonomy that soldiers in the army only dream of. If your players are fiercely independent and like the idea of scrounging mecha parts from the wreckage of their foes, guerilla adventures are a good choice.

Omicron 1100



Adventuring in a Military Setting

The *Mecha Crusade* campaign assumes that the characters are either part of the colonial military or closely allied with them. A military campaign differs from a traditional roleplaying setting in the following ways.

Taking Orders: Rather than enticing the characters to launch a new adventure (and hoping that the promised reward is enough to motivate them), you can simply use a high-ranking NPC to order them into action. This neatly solves the question of character motivation—"why would my character willingly put himself in harm's way?"—but some players perceive it as heavy-handed.

Because players can be stubbornly independent, it's best to give the characters additional motivation to tackle a mission beyond "following orders." The chance to explore a new environment or a shot at taking down a hated foe are good secondary motivations. Promotions in rank, transfer to a prestigious unit, or medals and decorations are good motivators, too. You don't have to bribe your players into undertaking missions, but you can use secondary motivations to subtly reinforce the notion that it's a good idea to follow orders.

The players will be keenly aware of one reward at your disposal: more build points for their mechas. You can promise better mechas if the characters undertake this mission, issue the characters better gear beforehand, or even have the character capture better mechas in the process of achieving the mission objective. But don't feel obligated to give the characters more build points with every mission. As long as your characters' mechas are within a few levels of the build point values suggested in Chapter 3, your campaign is on track.

Ranks Among the Heroes: Not only are heroes under the authority of NPCs of higher rank, but it's possible that they won't have the same rank as the other player characters. One player character might be a captain in charge of a whole platoon of mechas, with the other players comprising his staff officers and trusted sergeants. But if one player can give orders to every other player at the table, that player risks crowding everyone else out of the spotlight. Again, players can be stubbornly independent, and they may resent orders from another player as much as they resent orders from NPCs. Tread carefully whenever you put one player in "command" of another, and consider the personalities of the players involved.

Often, it's simplest to just keep all the characters at the same military rank. But in an ongoing campaign, this approach may strain credulity after a while. It's unusual for four captains to go into battle together, for example, much less four majors or generals. The best solution is for the player "in command" to agree—out loud and ahead of time—to not throw his weight around. Heroes in command will consult with their subordinates more than real-life commanders do, and they'll allow their fellow players a high degree of autonomy. (Player characters in command can be absolute tyrants to low-ranking NPCs, if they like—rank should have its privileges.)

The sort of hierarchy demonstrated in the *Star Trek* television shows is a good example of this kind of drama-based command. The captain of the *Enterprise* is in command, but he defers to crewmembers with expertise he doesn't have. Important decisions are usually reached after consultation and consensus. And when the captain barks out an order, it's usually an order to do something that the crewmember would have done anyway.

Ultimately, the degree to which you want to emphasize the military aspect of the *Mecha Crusade* campaign is up to you. Just make sure that GM and players talk about this issue beforehand. Roleplaying sessions set in a military setting can bog down in the details of command or break apart as the players of subordinate characters resent the power wielded by players of higher ranking characters.

Tsunami 280

Adventures Away from the Battlefield

Even though war rages across the solar system, there's plenty for adventurers to do away from the din of battle.

- **Alien Contact.** The timing is unfortunate for humankind, but researchers find preliminary evidence of life in the chilly depths of Europa's ocean. The characters might lead an undersea expedition to make first contact with well-hidden tentacled creatures, or perhaps they are hired as guards to make sure Earth agents don't disrupt the research.

  Alternatively, maybe the aliens aren't from the solar system at all. They may arrive in a vast battleship armada, ready to conquer and enslave Earth and Colony alike. The characters might be able to avert the invasion, convince the aliens to attack only Earth, or steal advanced technology from them.
- **New Colonies.** Even during a war, new installations spring up wherever there's a resource worth extracting or a scientific curiosity worth studying. Characters who get in on the ground floor of a new colony will have to keep the peace among their fellow colonists and deal with environmental hazards and other risks of living far from civilization. Even if they're far from the front, the characters will have to be alert for attacks or infiltration from Earth. Such an adventure might have a "Wild West" feel to it, with the characters in the role of sheriff, responsible for taking care of the community without any help from the outside world.
- **Rivalry in the Ranks.** Sometimes the best antagonists are the ones who are ostensibly working on the same side as the heroes. When the characters are away from the front lines, they'll still have to contend with with other mecha pilots in their unit. Rivalries have their seeds in the gamut of human emotions: jealousy, anger, a perceived (or real) slight, and so on. An unscrupulous rival can make the heroes' lives miserable in any number of ways: sabotaging their mechas, bad-mouthing them to superiors or comrades, or interfering with the heroes' duties. At first the characters might not even know who their rival is, if it's someone who harbors a secret grudge against the heroes. Eventually, the rivalry will probably lead to an out-and-out fight, whether it's a cowardly double-cross in the middle of battle or a gladiator-style "duel" on an unused training field. But the longer you let the rivalry simmer before it comes to actual blows, the sweeter the payoff of the final confrontation is.

Other Settings

You don't have to use the Solar System War as a backdrop for your campaign. Other campaign ideas include:

Exploring the Stars: Because they excel in a number of hostile environments, it's likely that mechas would be an important part of a space exploration effort. You could center a campaign around a huge starship sent beyond the solar system to explore new worlds in other systems. Such a ship would have a few mecha squadrons to protect the explorers and deal with exotic, dangerous planets. Each adventure could center around the exploration of a particular planet, which could harbor anything from an advanced alien civilization to an insidious virus or huge, hostile carnivores.

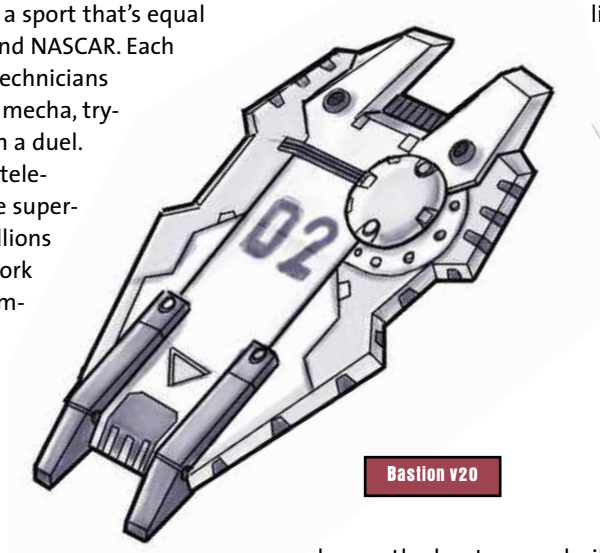
What You Should Do: If you want to run this sort of campaign, you'll need to develop basic rules for starships (perhaps adapting the rules in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game*), and you'll want to develop unique ecologies and hazards for each planet the characters visit. Over time, you'll develop key members of the ship's crew as recurring NPCs.

Mectha: Merging man and machine is a dangerous business, and perhaps the programmers who built the mechas in the first place had more sinister designs. In this campaign that crosses traditional mecha action with the horror of the *Call of Cthulhu* game, a secret society is trying to bring the end times near and invite the Elder Ones

to dine on humanity. The characters must use their mechas to face down all sorts of unspeakable horrors—even though they risk their sanity every time they strap themselves in.

What You Should Do: Coming up with scary monsters to fight and adapting the sanity rules from the *Call of Cthulhu* game are two important tasks for the GM before the campaign begins. It'll take trial and error to find the right balance between cerebral horror and fast-paced mecha action. Fundamentally, it'll be difficult to scare characters encased in high-tech powered armor, but the payoff should be worth it.

Mecha Gladiators: The society of the future is stable, prosperous, and bloodthirsty. The characters are mecha pilots who duel professionally in a sport that's equal parts boxing, reality television, and NASCAR. Each gladiator has a support staff of technicians that perpetually tinkers with his mecha, trying to eke out every advantage in a duel. Because the duels are massively televised, high-level mecha pilots are superstars, instantly recognized by millions of fans. The promoters and network executives take great pride in coming up with "interesting" (read: deadly) environments in which the mecha pilots fight.



Bastion v20

What You Should Do: A gladiator campaign requires very little in the way of new or adapted rules, which frees up more time for the GM to devise entertaining arenas for the battles and personalities for rival mecha pilots.

Servomotors and Sorcery: Some unexplained phenomenon sends the mecha-equipped characters into a D&D world—or it infuses a mecha-friendly near-future setting with magic and fantastic creatures. If you've ever wanted to pit an ancient red dragon against 20 tons of composite-fiber powered armor, this is the campaign for you.

What You Should Do: Many of the interactions between magic and mecha should be straightforward, but you'll want to address topics like spell failure chance, damage reduction, magic enhancement bonuses, and so on ahead of time. You'll also need to decide exactly how the mix of fantasy and high-tech happened, and to what degree users of each "technique" understand the other. If you're putting a lot of mecha technology into a fantasy setting, you'll want to give some thought to what sort of mechas the elves, dwarves, and other fantasy races will use. Finally, look through the *Monster Manual* for exciting foes for mecha-equipped characters.

EXPERIENCE AND ENCOUNTERS

Handing out experience points at the end of a *Mecha Crusade* session is relatively straightforward. Every foe the characters faced has a Challenge Rating (CR), and cross-referencing the enemy's CR with the level of the characters on the table in Chapter 8 of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game* determines how many experience points the player characters collectively receive. The player characters then divide up the experience points equally, assuming every character was present at the beginning.

But even a high-level GM character doesn't pose much of a challenge if the enemy doesn't have a mecha and the characters do. Nor is it much fun for the players if they get trounced by a low-level character with no build point limit on her mecha.

The experience point system assumes that in general, GM characters who use mechas have build points to spend equal to their level –1 on the build point budget table in Chapter 2. For each two levels above or below that build point level, add or subtract 1 level of CR.

For example, Yukoo is facing an 8th-level GM character known only as Totenkopf. For an ordinary encounter, Totenkopf's skull-adorned mecha should be worth about 23,100 build points—a typical build point budget for a 7th-level character. If Totenkopf has a mecha worth 30,600 build points, Totenkopf becomes CR 9, not CR 8.

For most *Mecha Crusade* campaigns, most experience will be earned by fighting mecha-equipped GM characters. But don't neglect nonmecha foes; send the characters on an adventure from time to time where using mechas is impossible or impractical.

If the player characters are in mechas and the GM characters aren't, the encounter probably isn't a challenge. The high hardness of mecha skin and the prodigious damage from mecha weapons will ensure that any mecha vs. non-mecha fight will end in a quick victory for the mechas. You can add variety to your encounters, though, by adding a few deadly foes that aren't just bad guys in powered armor.

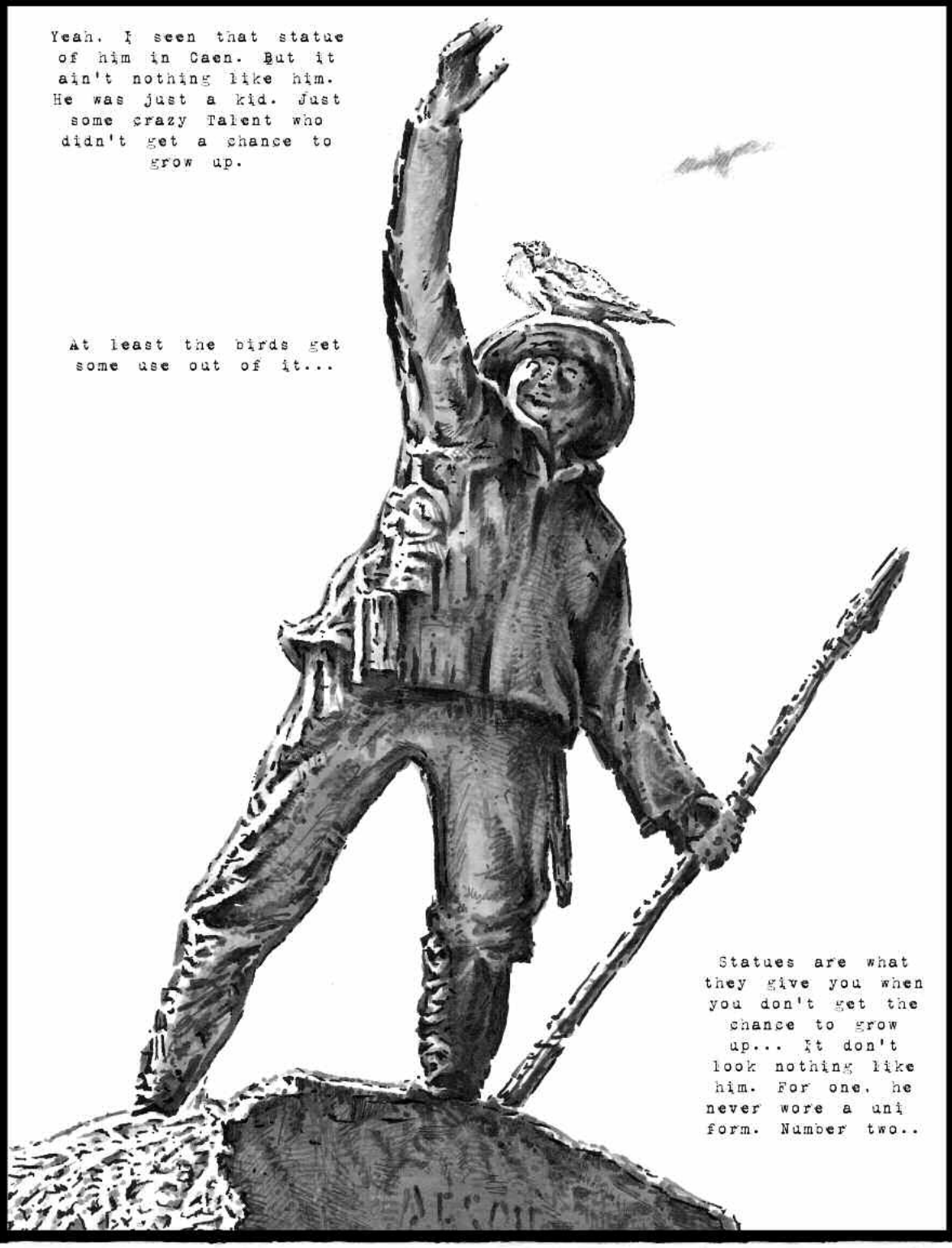
One easy way to do this is by creating hovertanks, air-defense drones, and other armored foes that aren't mechas. The dirty little secret? Design them as you would any other mecha, but describe them differently to your

players. They never need to know that the death tank they just faced had statistics identical to the Bismarck mecha (described in Chapter 3).

You also can loot good encounters from other d20 System games. If you want to have a spaceship vs. mecha dogfight, just borrow X-wings from the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game*—the mechas were designed to make good opponents for those starships. And if your campaign features more fantastic elements, take a monster or two from the *Monster Manual*. Often, they need not be magical. Perhaps a wing of wyverns has escaped from a genetics laboratory and rampages across the city until mecha-equipped law enforcement arrives to stop them.

Whether you take starships or sphinxes from another d20 game, run some playtests before you set the CR. There's no formula you can apply to set CR within a game, much less between two games designed for different genres. Fighting the encounter over and over again is the only way to properly assess CR.

Stephan Martiniere


Yeah. I seen that statue of him in Caen. But it ain't nothing like him. He was just a kid. Just some crazy Talent who didn't get a chance to grow up.
At least the birds get some use out of it...
Statues are what they give you when you don't get the chance to grow up... It don't look nothing like him. For one, he never wore a uni form. Number two..

GODLIKE

There Were Giants in Those Days Part Four: Aesgir, Spear of the Gods. By Dennis Detwiller

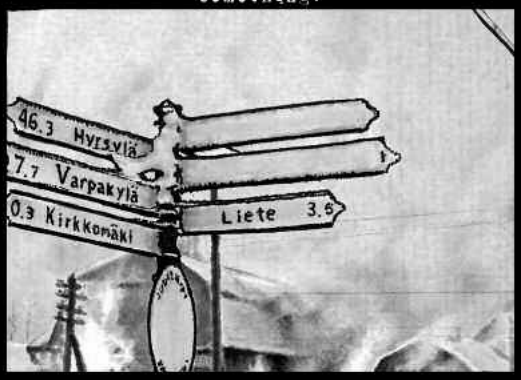
He sure as hell wasn't smiling when I last saw him. By that time Caen looked like a landfill. Aesgir had tangled with a bunch of German Supers, and hardly anything was left. Monty demanded more ground before Christmas, so Aesgir and his men moved in.

The kid was a killer, always talking to that crazy spear of his. When he wasn't throwing it through tanks or impaling Nazis on it, of course. Aesgir and two hundred of his men fought a war of attrition in the depths of Caen, and there was little we could do for them. They were, if you'll excuse me for saying it, the spearhead.

They ripped through the entire 12th SS, and elements of the LVX Korps, destroying guns, tanks and men. The few Allied soldiers who remained alive began to look at the kid from Norway as a God. They began to do risky things as demands piled up from headquarters. They began to go a little crazy.

By the time we caught up with them, there was no one left to save. The Germans and Allies had obliterated each other...

No one imagined that the invasion of Norway could give birth to something so powerful. When the Nazis rolled in and began killing, they woke something.



Churchill got the news that the Norwegian Talent had arrived in England in 1940, but the event remained shrouded in secrecy for weeks. No one knew why. It ate the old man up, having to make that choice. Pack the kid up to some boarding school or place his nearly limitless power on the frontline.

The British people were expecting some pitiless warrior fresh from the front.

Not a thirteen year old with a stage prop spear.

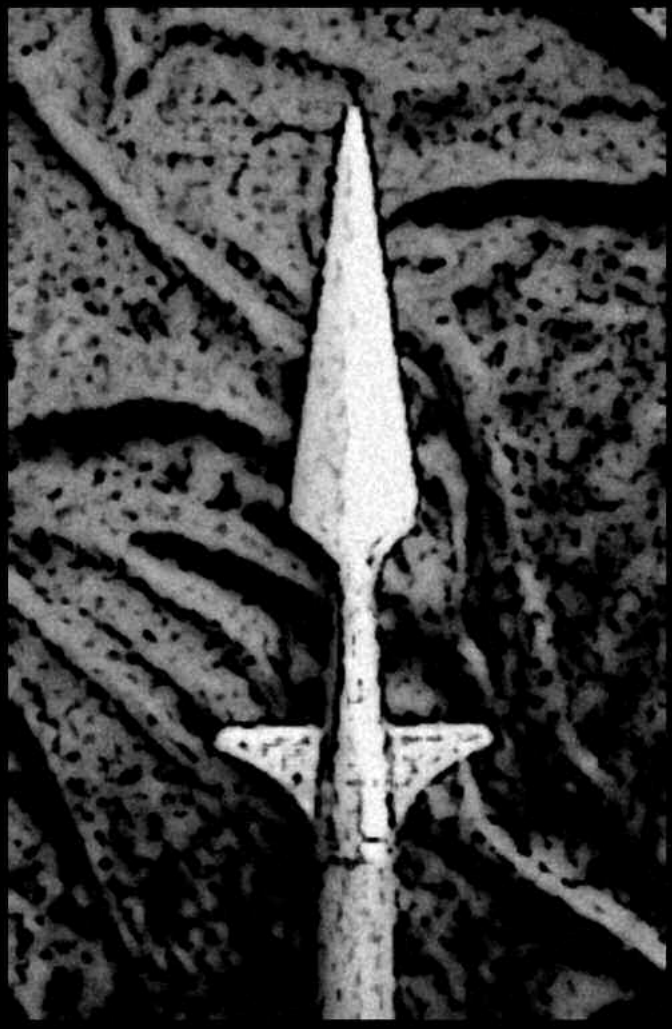
By the time the war started in earnest, the Norwegian Talent had grown. Calling himself "Aesgir" he fought alongside British forces at Norsk, Dieppe, in North Africa and in Crete. Although Hitler lived under the delusion that the Allies had no Superhumans, the kid drew the attention of the number two man in the Reich, Heinrich Himmler. The crazed leader was obsessed with the young man, and especially with his spear...

Himmler was certain the spear was the "Spear of Destiny", the weapon used to stab Jesus Christ on the cross. Legend had it that any army which entered battle with the Spear of Destiny before it could not be defeated.

For years, Himmler maneuvered to gain possession of it. Twice, German agents ambushed Aesgir and unsuccesfully attempted to capture it.

When word came back in 1944 that the Norwegian was pinned down in Caen, Himmler threw everything he could at him, in the hopes of capturing the object of his obsession.

After losing several thousand men, German agents managed to smuggle the spear back to Berlin, where it was placed on the wall of Himmler's ruined office. Germany's army enjoyed no good favor from it. Maybe Himmler though it would help him...



Like Aesgir, the spear failed to save Himmler. When Germany fell, he took the coward's route and committed suicide. The Spear was never found...

It's hard to clearly see why all these things happened. It all seems so crazy now. A lot of us didn't make it, and some who did would have been better off otherwise. At least the kid died for something he believed in... let me tell you about another guy...

Next Issue: Vogel, the Bird